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THE

CENTENARY

OF

METHODISM;

BEING A

CONDENSED AND CLASSIFIED HISTORY

OF THE

RISE, EXTENSION, AND CONTINUANCE, OF THAT SYSTEM

WHICH WAS FOUNDED BY

THE REV. JOHN WESLEY, A.M.,

IN THE YEAR 1739.

"Thus saith the LORD: stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old path, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."—JEREMIAH vi. 16.

DUBLIN:

PRIMITIVE WESLEYAN METHODIST BOOK-ROOM,

62, SOUTH GREAT GEORGE'S-STREET.

1839.

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TO

THE REV. ADAM AVERELL,

PRESIDENT OF THE

PRIMITIVE WESLEYAN METHODIST CONFERENCE,

THE PREACHERS AND REPRESENTATIVES

COMPOSING THAT BODY,

AND THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE CONNEXION AT LARGE,

AS A TOKEN

OF THE HIGH ESTIMATION IN WHICH THEIR ATTACHMENT

TO THOSE PRINCIPLES ESTABLISHED BY

THE VENERABLE FOUNDER OF METHODISM

IS HELD,

THIS SMALL VOLUME

IS, WITH AFFECTIONATE REGARD,

INSCRIBED BY

THE PUBLISHERS.

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PREFACE.

In submitting the following Manual of Methodism to the public, it may be necessary to remark, that our only object is to give a fair and impartial statement of facts, connected with that great revival of religion which commenced in England one hundred years ago, under the preaching of the venerated founders of Methodism. Unbiassed by any illiberal or sectarian views, we trust we have discharged our duty, in this work, with that candour and fidelity which should always characterize those who seek only the glory of God in the extension and establishment of his kingdom upon the earth.

Attached, as we confess ourselves to be, to that system which was originally founded by the Rev. John Wesley, we have studied to set

in a proper light the design of that great and good man, in the course he pursued during a long life of, perhaps, greater energy and more extensive usefulness, than that of any other labourer in the Christian vineyard since the days of the apostles. It will be found, however, that we have not made it our object to extol the labours and usefulness of the Methodist body above what they confessedly deserve, even in the judgment of those who by no means accord with them in all their peculiarities. We are fully sensible that "neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase:" and to Him we desire to ascribe all the glory of His own work.

We are inclined to think, that two most desirable objects will be answered by the publication of "The Centenary of Methodism." On the one hand, those who are comparatively unacquainted with the real principles of the Methodist body, may, through the medium of this volume, get such a view of its bearings and

design as will, by the blessing of God, remove much of that prejudice which might probably exist in their minds against it: and, on the other hand, a condensed and classified history of the rise, progress, and effects of Methodism during the first century of its existence, will be put into the hands of the members of our own society, that they may see their privileges, as well as the difficulties with which the system was obliged to contend in its first propagation and establishment.

With the exception of Dr. Whitehead's Life of Wesley, (a work which is now nearly out of print,) there is scarcely another volume containing an account of the venerable man to whom, under God, Methodism owes its origin, that is not tainted by party and sectarian views. A work, therefore, containing a correct statement of the principles on which Mr. Wesley founded his Society, and of the legitimate claims of the Primitive Wesleyan Methodists of Ireland to the honour of occupying, as it regards the Established Church and other de-

nominations of Christians, the position he maintained to the close of his life, was much needed, especially by the junior members of the Society: and will, we have no doubt, be regarded by the great body of the connexion, as supplying a very important *desideratum* in reference to original Methodism.

In the meantime, our earnest prayer is, in the language of one of our admirable collects, that God may "keep his church and household continually in his true religion; that they who do lean only upon the hope of his heavenly grace, may evermore be defended by his mighty power, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*"

Dublin, January, 1839.

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CENTENARY OF METHODISM.

CHAPTER I.

STATE OF RELIGION IN ENGLAND ANTERIOR TO THE ORIGIN OF METHODISM.

When the extensive moral influence that Methodism has exerted during the last hundred years is considered, it is presumed that a condensed and classified history of the rise, propagation, and present state of the System, in different parts of the world, will be not only acceptable to all who feel an interest in the general spread of the gospel, but especially so to the members and friends of the Methodist Society. Originating in proceedings for the revival of religion that were by no means the result of either premeditation or design, this Religious Institution would appear to have been intended by the Great Disposer of events to answer a most important purpose in his wise and beneficent arrangements in reference to his church. The test of a century is sufficient to try the genius and

spirit of any system—and an impartial survey of the effects of Methodism during that period, will, we trust, establish the fact, that it has been made subservient not only to the spiritual well-being of those who were brought within its immediate influence, but, in a more remote degree, to the revival which has subsequently taken place in the different religious communities of these lands.

The Reformation of the Church of England which had taken place nearly two centuries before the origin of Methodism, was, in its general consequences, an event fraught with blessings to the nation at large—and wherever its full advantages were enjoyed, the most salutary effects were experienced by every grade in society. The doctrines of justification by faith alone, and the regeneration of the heart by the influence of the Holy Spirit, which constituted such a prominent feature in the preaching of the reformers, have, in every period of the church's history, been found to be the only means of promoting a real revival of experimental and practical religion: and in the noble army of martyrs which the Church of England produced at that period, it is manifest that those doctrines had been attended by the blessing of Him by whom they had been originally revealed.

Several untoward circumstances, however, at a subsequent period, tended to obscure and darken those great evangelical truths. A spirit of anti-

nomianism soon found its way into the church; and, during the Commonwealth, religion was employed as a means of accomplishing mere political purposes—the noble plant of the Protestant Reformation being turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine.

The licentious manners of the court of Charles II. and the profaneness and infidelity which prevailed almost universally in the nation, had a tendency to bring about a total relaxation of ecclesiastical discipline; and the church was left, as Archbishop Leighton expresses it, like "a fair carcass without a spirit." It is true that even then she could boast of some of her brightest ornaments; but their erudition and industry were but partially felt, and were chiefly employed in the defence of Christianity against the attacks of its enemies. The doctrines of the Reformation which had been preached so powerfully and so successfully by a Cranmer, a Ridley, and a Latimer, were now thrown into the shade; and whilst every man discovered an eager anxiety to avoid the imputation of being a Puritan, Infidelity and Atheism in theory and vice and immorality in practice, became awfully prevalent throughout the land.

Such was the state of religion in England when James II. succeeded his unprincipled and dissolute brother. The plans he pursued, for the subversion of Protestantism and the restoration of Popery, are well known to every one acquainted

with the history of those unhappy times; and had it not been for the virtue, firmness, and unflinching integrity of the English hierarchy, it is difficult to say how far he might have succeeded in his destructive projects, for the nation was too well prepared by the prevalence of ignorance and profaneness to become an easy prey to the designing emissaries of the Church of Rome.

The accession of the Prince and Princess of Orange, however, happily dispelled those clouds which hung over the Church and people of England; while the principles of toleration that were established in their reign, and the encouragement that was given to every religious institution, were such as have justly attached to the memory of William and Mary the epithets of glorious and immortal. The influence of the Archbishops Tillotson and Sharp, and of several of their cotemporaries, was extensively felt at this period: and the fostering care of "the good Queen Anne" had also a beneficial influence in promoting, not only the stability of the Protestant religion, but that general reformation of manners which had happily commenced in the preceding reign. It was at this time that the pious and excellent Mr. Addison commenced his Spectator—a publication which contributed largely to the destruction of infidelity, and the recommendation of the genuine principles of sound morality.

These circumstances, together with the accession

of the illustrious House of Hanover to the throne of these realms, opened a brightening prospect to the friends of religion; and had the doctrines of the Reformation been now preached with zeal and energy, there is no doubt but the revival of religion that would have attended it would have been both glorious and extensive. But the calamity of this age was, that a kind of pelagianized Arminianism had supplanted those evangelical truths which are so beautifully and scripturally embodied in the Articles, Homilies, and Liturgical Offices of the Church of England. The Puritans had been zealous in preaching a free or gratuitous justification through the redemption of Christ; but this had, in many cases, been done in such a manner as to graft that doctrine upon the most stubborn stock in the Calvinian system. They had also employed, it is to be feared, those important truths connected with the influence of the Holy Spirit to promote their own ambitious and political purposes; and had thus engendered a spirit of fanaticism, which began with rebellion and proceeded to regicide. The clergy of the Established Church, therefore, forgetting that it was a perversion of the truth of which the Puritans had been guilty, and perceiving that those doctrines were so liable to abuse, by a mistaken caution, threw them into the shade, and contented themselves with a system of moralizing, which they injudiciously supposed to be practical preaching.

Had the Reformation of the Church of England been conducted by the State with as much wisdom and sincerity as seem to have influenced her clerical reformers, many of those evils might have been prevented which tarnished the glory of her subsequent history. This, however, was far from being the case; and therefore some of the fatal consequences of this want of political prudence is experienced in the present day. "Three measures," says Dr. Southey, "were required for completing the Reformation in England: that the condition of the inferior clergy should be improved; that the number of religious instructors should be greatly increased; and that a system of parochial education should be established and vigilantly upheld. These measures could only be effected by the legislature. A fourth thing was needful: that the clergy should be awakened to an active discharge of their duty; and this was not within the power of legislation. The former objects never for a moment occupied Wesley's consideration: * * * * his aim was direct, immediate, palpable utility. Nor could he have effected any thing upon either of these great legislative points: the most urgent representations, the most convincing arguments, would have been disregarded in that age, for the time was not come. The great struggle between the destructive and conservative principles—between good and evil—had not yet commenced; and it was not then fore-

seen that the very foundations of civil society would be shaken, because governments had neglected their most awful and most important duty. But the present consequences of this neglect were obvious and glaring: the rudeness of the peasantry, the brutality of the town populace, the prevalence of drunkenness, the growth of impiety, the general deadness to religion."

It was to combat these evils, and to revive those doctrines which were so prominent in the standard writings and formularies of the Church of England, but which were then so generally neglected, that the Messrs. Wesley and Whitefield commenced their career of itinerancy and field-preaching; and the formation of those societies in which the Methodist Connexion originated, was the consequence of their proceedings. Nor were such societies, as they originally stood, altogether novel or unprecedented in their nature, but the form which they subsequently assumed was that which gave them their peculiar and distinctive character. Fellowship meetings had been early established in Scotland amongst the lay-members of the Kirk, for the purpose of social prayer, expounding the Scriptures, and of mutual exhortation; but they had been strenuously opposed by some of the most eminent men amongst the covenanting clergy, who thought that laymen had no right to engage in such exercises, except within the limited circle of their own families. The people, however,

ultimately prevailed; and by an Act passed in the General Assembly of 1641, for the regulation of such meetings, those social assemblies received the sanction of ecclesiastical authority, and continue to be observed from that period, in different branches of the Presbyterian church, down to the present time.

In England likewise, through the exertions of Dr. Beveridge, Dr. Horneck, and others, religious societies were formed throughout the kingdom, which tended considerably to check that dissipation of manners, and looseness of morals, which were then so prevalent amongst the great majority of the people. These consisted exclusively of members of the Church of England, who were assisted by the clergy with forms of prayer, and such directions as were necessary for conducting their meetings in a profitable manner; and though not entirely extinct, they had dwindled into great insignificance before the origin and propagation of Methodism. In an account first published about the year 1698, Dr. Woodward describes those societies and their operations; and it was, probably, their remains in London and Bristol which Mr. Wesley mentions, in the early part of his Journals, as visited by him, for the purpose of prayer and expounding the Scriptures.

These societies first commenced among a few young men in London, about the year 1667, who had been convinced of sin under the preaching of

Dr. Horneck, and by attending the morning lectures in Cornhill. By the advice of some of the clergy they met together weekly for religious conversation, and rules were drawn up for the regulation of their meetings. They formed a fund, by a weekly contribution, for the relief of the poor, and appointed stewards to take care of, and to disburse their charities. In the latter part of the reign of James II. they met with much discouragement, but revived again and acquired new vigour as soon as William III. ascended the throne. About forty of these societies were in activity in London, within the Bills of Mortality, when Dr. Woodward wrote his account: there were also a few in the country, and nine in Ireland. They were obliged by their rules to discourse at their weekly meetings only upon such subjects as tended to practical holiness, and to avoid all controversial discussions.

Besides the relief of the poor and distressed, these societies used their utmost endeavours to assist in the establishment and maintenance of schools, and the catechising of "young and ignorant persons in their respective families;" and out of them arose about twenty associations in London, for the prosecution and suppression of vice. The latter, as well as the private societies for religious edification, had for a time much encouragement from several of the bishops, and were even countenanced and befriended by the queen. From the year 1710, however, they appear to have declined;

and notwithstanding several of them still remained in London, Bristol, and a few other places, at the commencement of Methodism, they were not in a state of growth and activity. In the year 1744 the sixth edition of Dr. Woodward's account of them was published; but from that time we hear no more of them: as Mr. Watson remarks, they either gradually died away, or were absorbed in the Methodist societies.

Mr. Wesley commenced his labours only a few years after George II. had begun to reign; and writers of all parties agree in stating that the religious aspect of affairs at that time was anything but cheering. The upper classes were, to a great extent, tainted with infidelity and licentiousness, and the lower classes sunk in the greatest ignorance and depravity, being brutal even in their amusements. Nor is this state of things surprising, when we know that clerical duties were imperfectly discharged, and public worship extensively neglected. Even amongst the clergy strenuous efforts were made, and by some of the best scholars of that day, to overturn the great truths of Christianity, by the introduction of the Arian heresy; and it is remarkable that among the Dissenters the same evil prevailed to an alarming extent. But the evil did not stop here. For a considerable time previously, the public mind had been undergoing a process of preparation to receive the seeds of infidelity—and the early part of the eighteenth

century found the works of a host of infidel writers in full circulation: so that this period has been justly regarded as one of the most unevangelical and ungodly in the history of the church since the time of the Reformation.

In a national point of view the religious movement which was promoted by Methodism was most seasonable and important. Infidelity was the forerunner of the revolution which soon after took place in France, and the prime actor in all the cruel scenes which marked the character of that horrible transaction. The spirit of the system is the same in all ages and nations, and had it descended upon our country at a time when our population was sunk in the most palpable ignorance, effects the most disastrous must have been produced. Had the agitation consequent upon the American war of independence, and the excitement produced by the revolution in a neighbouring nation, found the upper classes in England as depraved in morals, and the lower as unenlightened and vicious, as when Wesley and Whitefield entered upon the laborious work of preaching the gospel, it is not difficult to see what the result must necessarily have been in a national point of view.

It is, however, in its bearing upon the everlasting destinies of mankind, that the system which originated with the Wesleys appears most important. Blessed with a sense of the pardon of their sins, by the witness of God's Holy Spirit, these apostolical men, aided by the laborious Whitefield,

went forth to bring the gospel to bear upon vast masses of the working population. In carrying forward their great work the means which they adopted were peculiar and striking. One of the most remarkable was that of field and street preaching. The effects which followed were surprising. Vast numbers of persons, amongst whom were many of the most profligate characters, embraced the message of salvation, and became new creatures. In proclaiming the gospel message, they felt they had done nothing unless sinners were aroused to a sense of their danger, and made inwardly and outwardly holy, by believing upon the Son of God. Though not having many imitators of their zeal in field preaching, the Wesleys had the happiness to see the spirit of revival extending itself amongst the clergy of the establishment, and the dissenting ministers—and a religious movement was commenced, which has in its influence blessed mankind with institutions which are at once the glory of the church and of the world. Of these the British and Foreign Bible Society stands foremost in importance. In it is seen a common bond of union cementing in one common brotherhood Christians of different denominations. By its agency the Bible is finding its way into the language of every tribe and nation, and it will belong to the church in some future age to determine the amount of good which has been achieved by its instrumentality.

CHAPTER II.

THE RISE AND FORMATION OF THE METHODIST SOCIETIES.

The numerous biographers of the Rev. John Wesley have detailed so amply the minute circumstances of his life, that it would be superfluous for us to advert to them in these pages any farther than their connexion with Methodism may appear to demand. He was the second son of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, rector of Epworth in Lincolnshire;—a clergyman who early in life had deserted the cause of dissent, with which his father and grandfather had both been connected, and had become a zealous advocate of the religious and political principles which characterize the genuine members of the Church of England. His mother was the daughter of the celebrated Dr. Annesley, who, we believe, was the first that presided at a dissenting ordination in England, after the act of uniformity had been passed by the legislature. Mrs. Wesley, however, when only about thirteen years of age, had, by the most diligent application, become acquainted with the merits of the controversy between the Episcopalians and Dissenters;

and before she had any personal knowledge of her future husband, like him, she had also renounced nonconformity, and, from conviction, had become a member of the Established Church.

The instructions which the founder of Methodism received from his excellent parents, in his juvenile years, did not fail to lay the foundation of his future piety and usefulness; and their exemplary and uniform conduct appears to have given permanence and durability to the religious impressions which were made upon his youthful mind. It has been justly observed by Mr. Watson, when speaking of him and his brother, that "from their earliest years they had an example, in the father, of all that could render a clergyman respectable and influential; and, in the mother, there was a sanctified wisdom, a masculine understanding, and an acquired knowledge, which they regarded with just deference after they became men and scholars."

Mr. John Wesley was born in the year 1703; and after he had received the early part of his education at the Charter House, he was elected to Christ Church, Oxford, having then attained his seventeenth year; and, during the period of his undergraduate course, evinced a fine classical taste, as well as the most enlightened and liberal sentiments. When the time arrived in which he began to think of taking orders, he was roused to a sense of the importance of the step, and applied himself

diligently to the study of divinity. After having read a treatise entitled, *De Imitatione Christi*, usually ascribed to Thomas a Kempis, and another, written by Bishop Jeremy Taylor, denominated, "Rules of Holy Living and Dying," he resolved on the strictest regularity of life and conduct. The former of these works is one that is well calculated to promote deadness to the world, and to elevate the feelings and affections of the heart. Such is the excellence of the sentiments it contains, that it is impossible for a soul that is not truly alive to God, to form any proper estimate of its real worth. It must be admitted, however, that the views which the author has taken of human life and Christian duties, are painted with a strong tincture of enthusiasm. This, however, did not escape the penetrating mind of Mr. Wesley; and, in accordance with his usual practice at that time, he consulted his parents upon some of the sentiments of the writer, and expressed his regret that he was obliged to differ from him upon some points of considerable importance. "I cannot think," said he, in one of his letters, "that when God sent us into the world, he had irreversibly decreed that we should be perpetually miserable in it. If our taking up the cross imply our bidding adieu to all joy and satisfaction, how is it reconcileable with what Solomon expressly affirms of religion: that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Mrs. Wesley, who was a woman of no

ordinary cultivation of mind, approved of his animadversions upon this writer, and seemed to think that he was one of those men who, possessing more zeal than knowledge, would, without any necessity, strew the paths of human life with thorns. "Would you judge," said she, "of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure, take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things;—in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself."

But, notwithstanding the objections which Mr. Wesley raised to some of the sentiments advanced by the writer of this treatise, it is obvious that the work upon the whole did not fail to make a lasting impression upon his mind: and in 1735 he published his translation of it, somewhat abridged from the original, under the title of, "The Imitation of Jesus Christ, by Thomas a Kempis." This book is said to have been ever after his constant companion; and whenever he felt the slightest inclination to revolt from the path of duty, he seemed to say in the words of the author, "Thou dust, learn to obey."

Of Bishop Taylor's "Rules," it is justly said, by an anonymous writer, that they have been long, and still are, in high estimation by those who can

relish the most manly sense and soundest divinity. Their admired author, he continues, was in theology what the Honourable Robert Boyle was in philosophy—the delight of his own, and admiration of after ages. That part in particular of this splendid work which relates to purity of intention, affected Mr. Wesley's mind in a more than ordinary degree. "Instantly," he observes, "I resolved to dedicate *all* my life to God, *all* my thoughts, and words, and actions, being thoroughly convinced there was no medium; but that *every part* of my life (not *some* only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself—that is, in effect, to the devil."

While his mind was thus under serious impressions from the perusal of these two books, Law's "Christian Perfection," and "Serious Call," were put into his hands, which, he remarks, convinced him more than ever of the absolute impossibility of being half a Christian. These productions were written before Mr. Law had set common sense at defiance, and embraced the reveries of Mysticism. As a practical writer, in which character exclusively he appears in them, there were few men of his time whose writings breathe a more genuine spirit of gospel love, and whose sentiments and mode of inculcating them, at once simple and manly, appeal more forcibly to the heart. When Mr. Wesley first visited him, he was prepared to object to his views of Christian duty, as too elevated to be attainable; but Law silenced and satisfied

him, by replying, "We shall do well to aim at the highest degree of perfection, if we may thereby, at least, attain to mediocrity." From this time till he began to patronize the works of Jacob Behmen, he was an oracle to Mr. Wesley; but his confusion of sentiment after he became a Mystic, presented religion in such a defective and uncomfortable light, that the latter naturally ceased to have any confidence in his judgment.

The correspondence which Mr. Wesley kept up with his incomparable mother was among the principal means, under God, of producing that decided change which, at a subsequent period, began to exhibit itself in the whole of his conduct. Indeed from this correspondence, in which he lays open to a beloved parent the most intimate feelings of his heart, it is obvious, that he laboured, in Oxford, under a very painful conviction that he was far below that standard of Christian holiness which the gospel requires; and that therefore it was not from the Moravians, as some have stated, that he learned that unpleasing and humiliating lesson.

In the year 1725, Mr. Wesley received the order of deaconship from Dr. Potter, bishop of Oxford; and having been elected Fellow of Lincoln College, the following year, he began to indulge in those feelings which induced many good but mistaken men to retire from the world and to take up their residence in the wilderness. But the state of his

father's health, and the badness of the road between his two livings of Epworth and Wroote, prevented him from gratifying this ascetic disposition; and he was obliged to leave his collegiate retirement, and to reside at the latter place as his father's curate. However, after two years, in consequence of a regulation binding the Junior Fellows, who might be chosen moderators, to attend in person the duties of their office, he was summoned to his college; having, during his residence at Wroote, obtained the order of priesthood at the hands of the same prelate who had ordained him a deacon three years before.

About this time his brother Charles, who was only five years his junior, having been elected from Westminster to Christ Church, was a student at the University. He had received the first rudiments of his education under the care of his eldest brother Samuel, a friend and favourite of the celebrated Bishop Atterbury. From such an instructor he could not fail to have his mind deeply imbued with those opinions which were at that time denominated "high church principles." At first he had evinced considerable levity of mind upon the subject of religion; but he soon became serious and thoughtful, and discovered an earnest desire to save his soul. Meeting with two or three undergraduates, whose inclinations and principles resembled his own, they associated together for the purpose of religious improvement, lived by

rule, received the Lord's Supper weekly, and pursued their studies according to the method prescribed by the statutes of the University. Such conduct would, at any time, have attracted observation in an English University; but it was peculiarly remarkable at a time when morality and religion were so little valued, and the principles of infidelity were professed by some of the most eminent men in that ancient seat of learning. It was not surprising, therefore, that young men who professed to make religion the great business of their lives, should become objects of reproach and ridicule. They were designated Sacramentarians, Bible-bigots, Bible-moths, the Holy or the Godly Club; and, in consequence of their methodical mode of living, a Fellow of Merton College first gave them "the harmless name of *Methodists*." But notwithstanding all the shafts of ridicule, or sneers of malevolence and impiety, they were resolved to persevere in the path of duty, and to bear every reproach with patience as long as they were convinced that their actions proceeded from a right principle.

Some time previous to Mr. John Wesley's return to the University, he had travelled a great distance to see what is called "a serious man;" who, in the course of conversation, said to him, "Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven. Remember, you cannot serve him alone: you must either *find* companions or *make* them: the Bible knows nothing

of solitary religion." This observation laid fast hold of hismind, and, to his no small joy, just such companions were now prepared for him in this little association. He therefore joined them as soon as he had returned to reside at Oxford; and by his energy and influence soon became the prime mover in all their concerns. "In November, 1729," he observes in his journal, "four young gentlemen of Oxford, Mr. John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College; Mr. Charles Wesley, student of Christ Church; Mr. Morgan, commoner of Christ Church; and Mr. Kirkman, of Merton College, began to spend some evenings in a week together, in reading chiefly the Greek Testament. The next year, two or three of Mr. John Wesley's pupils desired the liberty of meeting with them; and afterwards one of Mr. Charles Wesley's pupils. It was in 1732 that Mr. Ingham, of Queen's College, and Mr. Broughton, of Exeter, were added to their number. To these, in April, was joined Mr. Clayton, of Brazen-Nose, with two or three of his pupils. About the same time, Mr. James Hervey was permitted to meet with them, and afterwards Mr. Whitefield."

The members of this little society first began by a solemn dedication of themselves to God, and an agreement to strengthen each other's hands by mutual fellowship in all the ordinances of religion. Accordingly they met often together at each other's rooms for prayer and reading the Scriptures: they

kept stated times of fasting, and received the communion every week: they visited the prisons and the sick: they sought out and relieved distressed objects, and appeared to act by rule in all their proceedings. But as their operations have been so circumstantially described by each of Mr. Wesley's biographers, it is unnecessary to give them in detail in the present connexion. Suffice it to say, that such was their zeal, their self-denial, and their unremitting exertions in every act of pious benevolence, that when the trustees of the new colony of Georgia wished to send out clergymen, not only to administer to the spiritual wants of the colonists, but also to attempt the conversion of the Indians, they directed their attention to this little society, and thought that Mr. John Wesley and his associates were peculiarly qualified for the undertaking. Accordingly, after some hesitation on his part, he consented to embark for America, as a missionary; and his brother Charles, having received holy orders, agreed to go with him, notwithstanding the disapprobation of his eldest brother, Samuel, was strongly expressed on the occasion. He was also accompanied by Mr. Ingham, of Queen's College, and Mr. Delamotte, the son of a merchant in London.

Mr. Wesley's passage was rendered remarkable for bringing him acquainted with the members of the Moravian church; as, amongst the settlers who were going out to the infant colony, there were

twenty-six Germans of this communion. In the conduct of this amiable and interesting people, he had an opportunity of witnessing the value of genuine religion, as well by the spirit of child-like humility which it produced, as its effect in banishing the slavish fear of death from the minds of its possessors. The ship in which he was embarked cast anchor near Tybee, an island in the mouth of the river Savannah, "where the groves of pine, running along the shore, made," he says, "an agreeable prospect, showing, as it were, the bloom of spring in the depth of winter." On the following day Mr. Oglethorpe went to Savannah, and returned the next, bringing with him Augustus Gottlieb Spangenberg, one of the pastors of the Moravian Church. Mr. Wesley, perceiving in him the same character which in his fellow-passengers had made such an impression upon his mind, asked his advice concerning his own conduct in a situation which was entirely new to him. "My brother," replied the German, "I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?" Surprised by such interrogatories, as unusual as they were abrupt, Mr. Wesley was at a loss to know what answer to return to them; which Spangenberg perceiving, said, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" After a pause, he replied, "I know he is the Saviour of the world." "True," rejoined the German,

"but do you know he has saved *you?*" Mr. Wesley answered, "I hope he has died to save me." The Moravian only added, "Do you know yourself?" and Mr. Wesley, who was evidently awed by this course of examination, confesses, that in answering "I do," he feared he was but uttering vain words.

In the arrangements made for the prosecution of the mission, the two brothers were separated; and Charles went with Mr. Ingham to Frederica, a settlement on the west side of the Island of St. Simon's, in the mouth of the river Alatamaha; while John and Mr. Delamotte took up their lodgings with the Germans at Savannah, till the house which was intended for them should be erected. "We had now," says Mr. Wesley, "an opportunity, day by day, of observing their whole behaviour; for we were in one room with them from morning to night, unless for the little time spent in walking. They were always employed, always cheerful themselves, and in good humour with one another. They had put away all anger and strife, and wrath, and bitterness, and clamour, and evil speaking. They walked worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called, and adorned the gospel of our Lord in all things." He was subsequently present at a consultation about the affairs of their church, in which, after several hours spent in conference and prayer, they proceeded to the election and ordination of a bishop: and, he says, that "the great simplicity, as well as solem-

nity of the whole, almost made him forget the seventeen hundred years between, and imagine himself in one of those assemblies where form and state were not, but Paul the tent-maker, or Peter the fisherman presided—yet with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

In the prosecution of the object of his mission, Mr. Wesley had but little success : in this country, he observes, God humbled him, and proved him, and showed him what was in his heart. In the means, however, which he adopted for the spiritual edification of his flock at Savannah, we can perceive the first rudiments of the future economy of that society of which he was afterwards the celebrated founder. It was agreed,—1. To advise the more serious among them to form themselves into a little society, and to meet once or twice a week, in order to reprove, instruct, and exhort one another. 2. To select out of these a smaller number for a more intimate union with each other ; which might be forwarded partly by their conversing singly with each, and inviting them all together to his house : and this accordingly they determined to do every Sunday in the afternoon.

But whilst he was thus labouring for the good of the people committed to his care, the religious feelings of his own mind were far from being in a state of tranquillity. He had witnessed the happy and triumphant death of one of the Moravians, which convinced him that it was the Christian's

privilege to be freed from that "fear which hath torment:" and his own terror during a severe thunder-storm, which in America is sometimes of a tremendous description, showed him that he possessed not that degree of faith which he was convinced was attainable by every genuine Christian. His sufferings, however, in the wilderness, amidst trials and afflictions of various kinds, arising principally from a faithful discharge of his duty, had a tendency to prepare him for a more extensive field of usefulness. He returned to England in the beginning of the year 1738, his brother Charles having preceded him a considerable time before.

While Mr. Wesley was in America, the care of the little society in Oxford had devolved on Mr. Whitefield, who had become very popular both in London and Bristol, after his ordination. His peculiar mode of preaching the doctrines of justification by faith and the new birth, had excited very general attention; and though stigmatised by some as a ranting enthusiast, he rose rapidly in the estimation of those who could relish the pathos of eloquence, or were disposed to bestow the just award of praise on the most ardent zeal and energetic activity. At first Mr. Wesley and he acted in conjunction with each other, but causes to which we shall subsequently advert, produced a separation between them.

During Mr. Wesley's voyage from America, and soon after his landing in England, he entered into

a strict examination of his own experience, and the result was, he came to the conclusion that he who had gone so far to convert others, had never been converted himself. It is more than probable, however, that he fell into an error, not very usual in such cases, by judging too severely of himself, when he said that he had no faith. The metaphysical jargon of the mystic school, adopted by some divines upon this subject, tends to bewilder the mind rather than to simplify a matter that is of such prime importance in Christian experience. Faith implies such a belief in all that God has revealed in his holy word as leads its possessor to act upon that conviction. The most prominent feature in the revelation that God has made to man, as well as the most applicable truth to the sinner convinced of his state of sin and condemnation, being contained in the words of the Apostle, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;" as soon as the penitent believes this with all his heart, he cannot fail to experience an immediate relief from his fears. To have his attention fixed upon this object, was what Mr. Wesley required to ease him of his anxiety; and, because this was not done, he was without that settled peace and tranquillity of mind which the stedfast believer in Christ always enjoys.

While in this state of mind, he applied himself to the study of a variety of authors upon this subject, and the natural consequence was, that he

was filled with a medley of opinions which were but badly calculated to relieve him in the existing state of his religious feelings. Had he examined the Homilies of his own church, and the works of those eminent divines who brought about her reformation, with as much care or diligence as that with which he investigated the reveries and dreams of the mystic writers, he would have been relieved much sooner from the load of anxiety which then oppressed him. Meeting, however, with Peter Boehler, a minister of the Moravian Church, he was convinced, after several conversations with him, that his faith had hitherto been too much separated from an evangelical view of the promises of a free justification through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. At a meeting, one evening, at Aldersgate-street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans, he observes, "About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the 'law of sin and death.'"

Perhaps it may not be amiss, to prevent a recurrence to this subject again, as the doctrine of the witness of God's Spirit takes such a prominent place in the preaching of the Methodists, to give Mr. Wesley's own explanation of it, as taught by

himself at a more advanced period of his ministry. Speaking of *assurance*, he says, "Some are fond of the expression; I am not: I hardly ever use it. But I will simply declare (having neither leisure nor inclination to draw the sword of controversy concerning it) what are my present sentiments with regard to the *thing* which is usually meant thereby. I believe a few, but very few Christians, have an assurance from God of everlasting salvation: and that is the thing which the Apostle terms the *plerophory*, or full assurance of hope. I believe more have such an assurance of being *now* in the favour of God, as excludes all doubt and fear: and this, if I do not mistake, is what the Apostle means by the *plerophory*, or full assurance of faith. I believe a consciousness of being in the favour of God (which I do not term plerophory, or full assurance, since it is frequently weakened, nay, perhaps interrupted by returns of doubt or fear,) is the common privilege of Christians, fearing God, and working righteousness. Yet I do not affirm there are no exceptions to this general rule. Possibly some may be in the favour of God, and yet go mourning all the day long. (But I believe this is usually owing either to disorder of body, or ignorance of the gospel promises.) Therefore, I have not, for many years, thought a consciousness of acceptance to be essential to justifying faith. And after I have thus explained myself once for all, I think, without any evasion or ambiguity,

I am sure without any self-contradiction, I hope all reasonable men will be satisfied: and whoever will still dispute with me on this head, must do it for disputing's sake."

Previous to the change of religious feeling which Mr. Wesley experienced, he and a few others had formed themselves into a society which met in Fetter-lane; and which consisted partly of Moravians, and partly of members of the Church of England. They subscribed to certain rules, which were drawn up and entitled, "Orders of a Religious Society meeting in Fetter-lane, in obedience to the command of God by St. James, and by the advice of Peter Boehler, 1738." These rules were subscribed by the members, and were of the following import:—That they would meet once a week to confess their faults one to another, and to pray one for another—that for this purpose they should be divided into bands or little companies, one of whom might be called the leader—that in those bands every one in order should speak as freely, plainly, and concisely as he could, the state of his heart, with his several temptations and deliverances, since the last time of meeting. Every Wednesday night a general conference of the bands was to be held—every fourth Saturday was appointed as a day of general intercession, and the Saturday following, a love-feast was to be held. Mr. Wesley, when speaking in reference to this subject, distinguishes the origin of Methodism into

three distinct periods. "The first rise of Methodism," says he, "was in November, 1729, when four of us met together at Oxford; the second was in Savannah, in April, 1736, when twenty or thirty persons met at my house; the last was at London, on this day (May 1, 1738,) when forty or fifty of us agreed to meet together every Wednesday evening, in order to free conversation, begun and ended with singing and prayer." It is to be observed that, notwithstanding some of the members of this society belonged to the Moravians, and some to the Church of England, they resolved to continue in the communion to which they respectively belonged; but, in the following year (1739,) when some of the Moravian teachers introduced new doctrines, Mr. Wesley and his friends separated from them and formed a distinct community; it is therefore from this latter period that Methodism, properly speaking, dates its origin.

Being satisfied on the subject of his own personal experience, Mr. Wesley preached with a zealous ardency, in every church to which he had access, a full, free, and present salvation, through faith in the blood of Christ: but his doctrines giving offence to the parochial clergy in general, he was, at length, without any ecclesiastical censure, excluded from all the pulpits in the metropolis; and a complaint having been made of him and his brother, to Dr. Gibson, the Bishop of London, respecting their preaching an absolute assurance of salvation, they

felt it their duty to wait upon his lordship, and to explain their views upon that subject. At this interview the bishop observed: "If by assurance, you mean an inward persuasion, whereby a man is conscious in himself, after examining his life by the law of God, and weighing his own sincerity, that he is in a state of salvation, and acceptable to God, I do not see how any good Christian can be without it." After strenuously maintaining, during the interview, the doctrine of justification by faith alone, as agreeable to the Scriptures and the standard writings of the Church of England, Mr. Wesley asked the bishop whether he considered religious societies conventicles or not. His lordship replied, "No, I think not; however," he continued, "you can read the Acts and Laws as well as I—I determine nothing."

Encouraged by this opinion of a prelate so justly esteemed for his learning and worth, Mr. Wesley proceeded in a course that led to results of which, at first, he had not the slightest anticipation.—His old friend, Mr. Whitefield, who had gone on a mission to Georgia, returned from that country about the close of the year 1738; and officiating one day at Bermondsey church, he found the concourse of people was so great that hundreds were obliged to go away for want of room, and above a thousand persons remained in the church-yard during the service; he therefore went out and preached to the multitude, from one of the tomb-

stones, in the open air. He also adopted the same novel mode of preaching, early in the spring of 1739, at Bristol, as most of the churches in that city were shut against him upon account of his doctrines, as well as his peculiar mode of inculcating them.

Contiguous to the city of Bristol there is a tract of ground containing between three and four thousand acres, which was formerly a royal chace, and hence denominated *Kingswood*. In process of time, the several lords whose estates lay round about its borders, had gradually taken possession of it: and, when cleared of the greater part of the wood which grew upon it, coal mines were discovered in it, from which Bristol derives its chief supply of fuel. This place was inhabited by a race of men, engaged in working these mines, as lawless and uninstructed as the inhabitants of New Zealand. Previously to Mr. Whitefield's sailing for America, it had been tauntingly remarked of him, that if he wanted to convert heathens he might go to the colliers of Kingswood. Indeed, these poor people owed their state of moral degradation to the neglect of those who employed them, and who ought to have made some provision for their religious instruction. At the time they were first visited by Mr. Whitefield, they had no place of worship, for Kingswood then belonged to the suburbicane parish of St. Philip and Jacob; and had the colliers been disposed to travel a distance of three or four miles,

in order to attend divine service, they would not have found room in a church situated in such a populous district.

To these poor destitute people, Mr. Whitefield soon directed his attention; and the change was incredible which was effected in a short time in their moral condition. On Saturday, Feb. 17, 1739, in the afternoon, he stood upon a mount, in a place called Rose Green, and preached to a small congregation, consisting of about two hundred persons, who had been attracted to the place by the novelty of his proceeding. His second audience consisted of about two thousand, his third of a number from four to five thousand, and in a short time his hearers increased to the number of twenty thousand. Mr. Whitefield was well qualified both by talent and ardency of spirit to make a powerful impression upon the minds of his auditors; and the deep silence of the rude assembly, while he saw the "white gutters" made by the tears which fell plentifully down their cheeks, that were blackened with the dust of the coal pits, gave the first indication that they felt the moral force of what was delivered in their hearing, In fact, the powerful effect produced by his preaching soon wrought such an extraordinary change in the conduct of these poor people, as to excite wonder and astonishment throughout all the surrounding country.

At the pressing request of Mr. Whitefield, who

had been so successful in this place, Mr. Wesley was prevailed upon to visit Bristol, and, though with reluctance at first, he was induced to adopt the same extraordinary mode of calling sinners to repentance. "I could scarce reconcile myself," says he, "at first to this strange way, having been all my life, till very lately, so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church." His labours also were crowned with success; but he had subsequently the advantage of Mr. Whitefield in giving permanence to the impressions he made upon his hearers, by the formation of societies wherever he went, and the subdivision of those societies into classes and bands, under the superintendence of the most judicious and pious persons from among themselves, who were denominated their *leaders*.

By the blessing of God, upon the labours of these two eminent men, such was the moral change produced amongst the inhabitants of Kingswood, that it no longer resounded with cursing and blasphemy as it had formerly done: it was no longer the scene of drunkenness and immorality; but peace and good order were conspicuously prevalent amongst the poor colliers, who had hitherto rendered themselves proverbial for wickedness, even amongst their thoughtless and irreligious neighbours. A house was also founded for the instruction of their children, by the exertions of those that had been the means of calling themselves

"from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." In Bristol, the number of Mr. Wesley's hearers had increased so much, that the usual places of meeting, which were in Nicholas-street, Baldwin-street, and the Back-lane, being small and incommodious rooms, and not entirely safe, were found insufficient for their accommodation; and on the 12th of May, 1739, the first stone of the first Methodist preaching-house was laid in the Horse-Fair, near St. James's church-yard, where a piece of ground had been obtained for the building.

A short time after this, Mr. Wesley gave the following summary of his opinions upon some particular points of doctrine; and from it we may judge of the principles which were at this time propagated by him and his associates:

"A serious clergyman desired to know in what points we differed from the Church of England. I answered: To the best of my knowledge, in none; the doctrines we preach are the doctrines of the Church of England; indeed the fundamental doctrines of the church, clearly laid down, both in her prayers, articles, and homilies.

"He asked, 'In what points then do you differ from the other clergy of the Church of England?' I answered: In none from that part of the clergy who adhere to the doctrines of the church; but from that part of the clergy who dissent from the church (though they own it not) I differ in the points following:—

"First—They speak of justification, either as the

same thing with sanctification, or as something consequent upon it. I believe justification to be wholly distinct from sanctification, and necessarily antecedent to it.

"Secondly—They speak of our own holiness or good works as the cause of our justification, or that for the sake of which, on account of which, we are justified before God. I believe, neither our own holiness nor good works are any part of the cause of our justification; but the death and righteousness of Christ are the whole and sole cause of it, or that for the sake of which,—on account of which, we are justified before God.

"Thirdly,—They speak of good works as a condition of justification necessarily previous to it. I believe, no good work can be previous to justification, nor, consequently, a condition of it; but that we are justified (being till that hour ungodly, and therefore incapable of doing any good work) by faith alone; faith, without works; faith, though *producing* all, yet *including* no good works.

"Fourthly,—They speak of sanctification, or holiness, as if it were an outward thing; as if it consisted chiefly, if not wholly, in these two points: 1. The doing no harm; 2. The doing good, as it is called; that is, the using the means of grace, and helping our neighbour.

"I believe it to be an inward thing, namely, the life of God in the soul of man; a participation of the divine nature; the mind that was in Christ; or

'the renewal of our heart after the image of him that created us.'

"Lastly,—They speak of the new birth as an outward thing; as if it were no more than baptism, or, at most, a change from outward wickedness to outward goodness, from a vicious to what is called a virtuous life. I believe it to be an inward thing; a change from inward wickedness to inward goodness; an entire change of our inmost nature from the image of the devil, wherein we are born, to the image of God; a change from the love of the creature to the love of the Creator, from earthly and sensual to heavenly and holy affections; in a word, a change from the tempers of the spirits of darkness to those of the angels of God in heaven.

"There is therefore a wide, essential, fundamental, irreconcileable difference between us; so that if they speak the truth as it is in Jesus, I am found a false witness before God. But if I teach the way of God in truth, they are blind leaders of the blind."

Shortly after Mr. Wesley's departure from London for Bristol, a Mr. Shaw, who was a member of the little society that had been formed in the metropolis, began to sow the seeds of discord among his brethren, by affirming that there is no order of men in the Christian ministry, that, properly speaking, are commissioned to exercise the functions of the priesthood, and that he himself, though a layman, had as good a right to baptize

and administer the Lord's Supper, as any of those who had been formally ordained to the sacred office. Had Mr. Shaw lived at a more modern period, when a spirit of latitudinarianism upon such subjects began to prevail amongst the Methodists, his opinions might have been, not only tolerated, but even abetted and maintained, by a considerable party in the society. The spirit of dissent, however, not having entered into any part of the economy of the Primitive Methodists, he was quickly expelled for his heterodoxy, and with a few others he subsequently renounced all connexion with the Church of England, and, of course, acted upon his own principles.

In the meantime, Mr. Whitefield had commenced preaching in the open air at London; and was attended by vast congregations amounting sometimes to thirty or forty thousand persons. The principal scene of his labours was on Moorfields and Kennington common. No person visiting the former place at present, could form a due estimate of the perilous task that was undertaken, when this undaunted soldier of the cross took his stand to proclaim to the assembled multitudes the unsearchable riches of Christ.

This tract of ground, which was originally a marsh, is now almost entirely covered with buildings of various descriptions. "It was gradually drained; the first bricks which are known to have been used in London were made there;

and, in process of time, the greater part of the ground was converted into gardens. These were destroyed that the city archers might exercise themselves there. The bow and arrow fell into disuse; Bedlam was built there; part of the area was laid out in gravel walks, and planted with elms, and these convenient and frequented walks obtained the name of the City Mall. But from the situation of the ground, and the laxity of the police, it had now become a royalty of the rabble, a place for wrestlers and boxers, mountebanks and merry-andrews; where fairs were held during the holy-days, and where at times the idle, the dissolute, and the reprobate resorted; they who were the pests of society, and they who were training up to succeed them in the ways of profligacy and wretchedness."

Preaching in this place, Mr. Whitefield justly called, attacking the devil in one of his strong-holds; and he was told by several persons, if he made the attempt, that he would never come away from the place alive. But he was not to be intimidated by imaginary dangers; he preached at Moorfields with incredible success: his congregations assembled from all quarters in carriages, on horseback, and on foot; and it is said, that at his Sunday preachings in this place, when he collected for the orphan-house, so many half-pence were given him by his poor auditors, that he was wearied in receiving them, and they were more than one man could carry home.

Mr. Charles Wesley also commenced the itinerant plan, though a stronger advocate for church order than either his brother or Mr. Whitefield, and preached to several thousands of hearers at Moorfields and on Kennington common. At Oxford, Gloucester, and many other places, he preached in the churches, but when he was refused permission to do so, he betook himself to the open fields. In the month of August, he joined his brother at Bristol; and the latter soon after made a short visit to Wales; preached at several places either in private houses or in the open air; and formed a few societies.

By the exertions of the two brothers and their friend Mr. Whitefield, Methodism was now making a rapid progress throughout a considerable part of the kingdom, and before the close of the year 1739, societies were formed not only in London and Bristol, but in various other places. At first several of the clergy had given countenance to their proceedings, and acted in conjunction with them; but few men were able to bear the hardships and fatigues connected with such a laborious employment: their number therefore gradually diminished, so that after Mr. Whitefield's separation, Mr. Wesley found himself deserted by all his early coadjutors amongst the clergy, but by his brother alone. Placed, therefore, in circumstances of peculiar difficulty, he was subsequently induced to employ the agency of lay-preaching; and by a train of providential events that system of itine-

rancy was ultimately organized which now constitutes the most prominent feature in the Methodist economy.

In estimating the moral effects of Methodism, it should not be forgotten that it was originally designed for the poor. Nor have its benefits been confined to the lower classes of society; they have extended to all ranks, and imparted an influence to all existing establishments. "In estimating the effects of Methodism," says Dr. Southey, "the good which it has done indirectly must not be overlooked. As the Reformation produced a visible reform in those parts of Christendom where the Romish church maintained its supremacy, so, though in a less degree, the progress of Wesley's disciples has been beneficial to our establishment, exciting in many of the parochial clergy the zeal which was wanting. To the impulse also, which was given by Methodism, that missionary spirit may be ascribed which is now carrying the light of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth." These are facts that cannot be denied. By the intelligent part of the community the character of the system is properly estimated, and however men may differ in opinion on speculative points of theology, it is now generally admitted, that the renovation of our church and the amelioration of our country are principally to be attributed to the religious principles which were so widely diffused by Wesley and his colleagues.

CHAPTER III.

SEPARATION BETWEEN MR. WESLEY AND MR. WHITEFIELD.

Mr. Wesley at first had found a powerful auxiliary and useful coadjutor in Mr. Whitefield: they continued for some time to labour in conjunction with each other: preached in the same pulpits: assisted each other in that extraordinary plan which they had adopted for the revival of religion: and seemed to vie with each other in nothing but how they could best promote the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the welfare of mankind in general. But Mr. Whitefield's having become a convert to the theological system known by the name of Calvinism, at length brought about a separation between them, which still continues to exist amongst their respective followers.

George Whitefield was born at the Bell Inn, in the city of Gloucester, at the close of the year 1714. His disposition from childhood he represents in a very unfavourable light himself: but still he could recollect early movings of the heart, which satisfied him in after life, that "God loved him with

an everlasting love, and had separated him even from his mother's womb, for the work to which he was afterwards pleased to call him." Having received a religious education, he had, early in life, evinced a predilection for the clerical profession. When he had attained his eighteenth year, his mother sent him to the University of Oxford, where, by the recommendation of some friends, he obtained a servitor's place in Pembroke College. Before he had gone to Oxford, he had heard of the young men there who "lived by rule and method," and were therefore called Methodists. They were now much talked of, and ridiculed, and despised by the thoughtless and profane; but possessing himself a kindred feeling, Whitefield defended them upon all occasions—and when he saw them pass through a crowd of revilers and scoffers, to receive the communion at St. Mary's Church, he was strongly inclined to follow their example. For more than a year he longed to be acquainted with them; but a sense of his inferior condition as a servitor prevented him from making any overture for that purpose. However a circumstance soon occurred which brought about the object he so much desired. A pauper had attempted suicide, and he sent a poor woman to inform Charles Wesley, that he might visit the person for the purpose of administering religious instruction: the messenger was charged not to tell by whom she was sent; but, notwithstanding her orders, she revealed his name,

and Charles Wesley, who had seen him frequently walking by himself, and had heard something of his character, invited him to breakfast the next morning. An introduction to those other young men, who were at that time associated with him, soon followed; and Whitefield, like them, in a short time, "began to live by rule, and to pick up the very fragments of his time, that not a moment of it might be lost."

After having completed his undergraduate course, he was ordained by Dr. Benson, Bishop of Gloucester, and entered with great zeal upon the exercise of his ministry. On his second visit to America, having been well received by many pious ministers of the Calvinistic persuasion in the Northern States, he began at length to relish their theological sentiments. They strongly recommended to him the writings of the Puritan divines, whose opinions he swallowed with avidity, and from that time espoused, with the utmost decision, the doctrine of unconditional predestination. This alarmed Mr. Wesley and his friends, and the circumstances which followed rendered a separation inevitable. Hence the respective adherents of these two eminent men were afterwards distinguished into Calvinistic and Arminian Methodists.

In separating from the Moravians, Mr. Wesley had experienced but little sacrifice of feeling: but that he felt exceedingly upon this occasion, and did all in his power to prevent a separation, is

obvious from the most authentic and unquestionable evidence. He even made concessions favourable to the Calvinistic system that in his cooler moments he must afterwards have condemned himself; but all his efforts to prevent the breach proved ultimately fruitless and unavailing. He had, in the beginning, endeavoured to obtain Mr. Whitefield's acquiescence in the doctrine of Christian perfection, but his dissent upon this, as well as his avowal of the Calvinistic tenets of election and irreversible decrees, had called forth some observations from Mr. Wesley of which he could not approve, and yet was still more unable to answer. Mr. Whitefield's reply, however, was highly creditable to his feelings, and, had he acted consistently with the professions he made at that time, there is no doubt but the separation which followed might have been avoided, and a union preserved between them, notwithstanding their acknowledged difference of opinion on the points in dispute. "My honoured friend and brother," said he, "for once hearken to a child who is willing to wash your feet. I beseech you, by the mercies of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, if you would have my love confirmed towards you, write no more to me about misrepresentations wherein we differ. To the best of my knowledge, at present no sin has dominion over me, yet I feel the strugglings of in-dwelling sin day by day. The doctrine of election, and the final perseverance of

those who are in Christ, I am ten thousand times more convinced of, if possible, than when I saw you last. You think otherwise. Why, then, should we dispute, when there is no probability of convincing? Will it not, in the end, destroy brotherly love, and insensibly take from us that cordial union and sweetness of soul, which I pray God may always subsist between us? How glad would the enemies of the Lord be to see us divided! How many would rejoice, should I join and make a party against you! And, in one word, how would the cause of our common Master every way suffer, by our raising disputes about particular points of doctrine! Honoured Sir, let us offer salvation freely to all by the blood of Jesus; and whatever light God has communicated to us, let us freely communicate to others. I have lately read the life of Luther, and think it in no wise to his honour, that the last part of his life was so much taken up in disputing with Zuinglius and others, who, in all probability, equally loved the Lord Jesus, though they might differ from him in other points. Let this, dear Sir, be a caution to us; I hope it will to me; for, by the blessing of God, provoke me to it as much as you please, I do not think ever to enter the lists of controversy with you on the points wherein we differ. Only I pray to God, that the more you judge me, the more I may love you, and learn to desire no one's

approbation, but that of my Lord and Master Jesus Christ."

Mr. Whitefield was in America when he wrote this letter, and in about two months after, it was followed by another, which contains the following observations: "Honoured Sir, I cannot entertain prejudices against your conduct and principles any longer without informing you. The more I examine the writings of the most experienced men, and the experiences of the most established Christians, the more I differ from your notion about not committing sin, and your denying the doctrine of election, and the final perseverance of the saints. I dread coming to England, unless you are resolved to oppose these truths with less warmth than when I was there last. I dread your coming over to America; because the work of God is carried on here, and that in a most glorious manner, by doctrines quite opposite to those you hold." And before the close of this letter, with his characteristic enthusiasm, he says: "God himself, I find, teaches my friends the doctrine of election. Sister H. hath lately been convinced of it; and, if I mistake not, dear and honoured Mr. Wesley hereafter will be convinced also.—Perhaps I may never see you again till we meet in judgment; then, if not before, you will know, that sovereign, distinguishing, irresistible grace brought you to heaven."

This letter was received by Mr. Wesley with

every degree of kindness and fraternal affection. He observes in his reply: "The case is quite plain. There are bigots both for predestination and against it. God is sending a message to those on either side, but neither will receive it unless from one who is of their own opinion. Therefore, for a time, you are suffered to be of one opinion, and I of another. But when his time is come, God will do what men cannot—namely, make us both of one mind."

Had this controversy been carried on, only between the two excellent men who were the principals in it, there is no doubt but an open rupture might have been avoided. But the intemperate zeal of some of the Calvinistic Methodists in England was forcing forward that separation which both Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield so much feared would ultimately take place. One of the leading members of the Society in London, a Mr. Acourt, had frequently disturbed them by introducing there disputed points of doctrine. Upon one occasion, by the direction of Charles Wesley, he was refused admission. "What!" said he, "do you refuse admitting a person into your Society, only because he differs from you in opinion?" Mr. Wesley answered, "No. But what opinion do you mean?" He replied, "That of election. I hold a certain number is elected from eternity; and these must and shall be saved—and the rest of mankind must and shall be damned. And many

of your Society hold the same." Mr. Wesley answered, "I never asked whether they hold it or no. Only let them not trouble others by disputing about it." Acourt said, that he would dispute about it wherever he came. "Why then," said Mr. Wesley, "would you come among us, who, you know, are of another mind?" "Because you are all wrong," he replied, "and I am resolved to set you all right." And when Mr. Wesley observed, he was afraid that his coming with this view would not be profitable either to himself or others: he concluded by saying, "Then I will go and tell all the world, that you and your brother are false prophets; and I tell you, in one fortnight you will all be in confusion."

No man possessed greater firmness of mind than Mr. John Wesley when he considered himself called upon by his duty to act; and, notwithstanding his attachment to his former friend and companion, Mr. Whitefield, he could by no means give countenance to what he conceived to be a dangerous error: he, therefore, published that sermon upon "Free Grace," which was the primary occasion of the breach with Mr. Whitefield. This is pronounced, by Doctor Southey, to be "one of the most able and eloquent of all his discourses; a triumphant specimen of empassioned argument." "Call it by whatever name you please," said Mr. Wesley, attacking the Calvinistic doctrine, "Election, Preterition, Predestination, or Reprobation,

it comes to the same thing. The sense is plainly this: by virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, one part of mankind are infallibly saved, and the rest infallibly damned; it being impossible that any of the former should be damned, or that any of the latter should be saved." Having thus stated what the doctrine of absolute predestination amounts to, he attacked it in such a tremendous strain of eloquence, as showed with what indignation, in his zeal for God, and in his love for his fellow-creatures, he regarded a doctrine so injurious to both. This offence was unpardonable in the eyes of the ultra-Calvinists, and even those who were moderate in their views, felt it too keenly not to complain of its severity.

It is not to be supposed that Mr. Whitefield, who felt his inability to reply to this most powerful display of logical talent, intended to take his opponent on the weak side, when he began to plead his own experience in favour of the doctrine of predestination. It is more probable that his feelings were in unison with his expressions; but he erroneously ascribed them to the influence of his peculiar opinions. "Give me leave," said he, in one of his letters, "with all humility, to exhort you not to be strenuous in opposing the doctrines of election and final perseverance, when, by your own confession, you have not the witness of the Spirit within yourself, and consequently are not a proper judge.—I am assured God has now for

some years given me this living witness in my soul. I can say I have been on the borders of Canaan, and do every day, nay, almost every moment, long for the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, not to evade sufferings, but with a single desire to see his blessed face. I feel his blessed Spirit daily filling my soul and body, as plain as I feel the air which I breath, or the food which I eat. Perhaps the doctrine of election and final perseverance hath been abused, (and what doctrine has not?) but, notwithstanding, it is children's bread, and ought not, in my opinion, to be withheld from them, supposing it is always mentioned with proper cautions against the abuse. Dear and honoured Sir, I write not this to enter into disputation. I hope, at this time, I feel something of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. I cannot bear the thoughts of opposing you: but how can I avoid it if you go about, as your brother Charles once said, to drive John Calvin out of Bristol? Alas, I never read anything that Calvin wrote: my doctrines I had from Christ and his Apostles; I was taught them of God; and as God was pleased to send me out first, and to enlighten me first, so, I think, he still continues to do it." "I am sorry," says he, again, "honoured Sir, to hear, by many letters, that you seem to own a sinless perfection in this life attainable. I think I cannot answer you better than a venerable old minister in these parts answered a Quaker: 'Bring me a man that hath really arrived

to this, and I will pay his expenses, let him come from whence he will.' Besides, dear Sir, what a fond conceit is it to cry up *perfection*, and yet cry down the doctrine of *final perseverance?* But this, and many other absurdities, you will run into, because you will not own election; and you will not own election, because you cannot own it without believing the doctrine of reprobation. What, then, is there in reprobation so horrid?"

Upon these extracts it may be necessary to observe, that Mr. Whitefield's advancing his own feelings and experience, as a proof that the part he had taken in this particular controversy was approved by God, savoured strongly of the fanaticism of the puritanical school, in which he had now become a voluntary disciple. They might be a proof of his own sincerity, and that his conscience did not condemn him in maintaining that side of the question which he believed to be right, but they were certainly no evidence that the doctrine of Calvinistic election was ever taught by Christ or his Apostles. With respect to the charge against Mr. Wesley of preaching "a *sinless perfection* in this life attainable," it is but fair to attend to his own observations upon that subject: "I believe," says he, "there is no such perfection in this life as excludes those involuntary transgressions, which I apprehend to be inseparable from mortality. Therefore, '*sinless perfection*,' is a phrase I never use. I believe a person filled

with the love of God is still liable to involuntary transgressions: such transgressions you may call sins if you please—I do not." In reply to the concluding part of the last extract, in which Mr. Whitefield says, "What, then, is there in reprobation so horrid?" Dr. Southey justly observes, "That question might easily have been answered. The doctrine implies that an Almighty and All-wise Creator has called into existence the greater part of the human race to the end, that after a short, sinful, and miserable life, they should pass into an eternity of inconceivable torments, it being the pleasure of their Creator that they should not be able to obey his commands, and yet incur the penalty of everlasting damnation for disobedience. In the words of Mr. Wesley, who has stated the case with equal force and truth, 'the sum of all is this: one in twenty (suppose) of mankind, is *elected;* nineteen in twenty are *reprobated!* The elect shall be saved, *do what they will:* the reprobate shall be damned, *do what they can.*'"

But as Mr. Whitefield's zeal became every day more inflamed by the protraction of this controversy, he assumed a superiority over Mr. Wesley, "who was as much his superior in intellect as in learning," that no circumstance connected with the difference between them could either warrant or justify. "Dear brother Wesley," says he, "what mean you by disputing in all your letters? May God give you to know yourself, and then you

will not plead for absolute perfection, or call the doctrine of election a doctrine of devils. My dear brother, take heed! See that you are in Christ a new creature! Beware of a false peace; strive to enter in at the strait gate; and give all diligence to make your calling and election sure; remember you are but a babe in Christ, if so much! Be humble, talk little, think and pray much. Let God teach you, and he will lead you into all truth. If you must dispute, stay till you are master of the subject; otherwise you will hurt the cause you would defend." In a subsequent letter he goes on to say: "Dear, dear Sir, oh, be not offended! For Christ's sake be not rash! Give yourself to reading. Study the covenant of grace. Down with your carnal reasoning! Be a little child; and then, instead of pawning your salvation, as you have done in a late hymn-book, if the doctrine of universal redemption be not true; instead of talking of sinless perfection, as you have done in the preface to that hymn-book, and making man's salvation to depend on his own free-will, as you have done in this sermon, you will compose a hymn in praise of sovereign, distinguishing love. You will caution believers against striving to work a perfection out of their own hearts, and print another sermon the reverse of this, and entitle it, *Free Grace indeed;* free, because not free to all; but free, because God may withhold or give it to whom, and when he pleases. Till you do this, I

must doubt whether or not you know yourself. God knows my heart—nothing but a single regard to the honour of Christ has forced this letter from me. I love and honour you for his sake; and when I come to judgment, will thank you, before men and angels, for what you have, under God, done for my soul. There, I am persuaded, I shall see dear Mr. Wesley convinced of election and everlasting love. And it often fills me with pleasure to think how I shall behold you casting your crown down at the feet of the Lamb, and, as it were, filled with a holy blushing, for opposing the Divine Sovereignty in the manner you have done."

Mr. Whitefield's friends in London having got a copy of this letter, had it printed without either his or Mr. Wesley's permission, and distributed a number of copies of it at the door of the Foundery, and even in the meeting itself. Mr. Wesley perceiving their intention in this mode of proceeding, took one of them in his hand into the pulpit, and having stated to the congregation the fact of its surreptitious publication, he observed, "I will do just what, I believe, Mr. Whitefield would, were he here himself," and then tore it in pieces. His example was followed by every one present; and, in reference to the person by whom the letter had been published and circulated, he says in his Journal, "Ah, poor Ahitophel! *Ibi omnis effusus labor!*"

But whilst a correspondence was thus kept up

between Mr. Wesley in England and Mr. Whitefield in America, circumstances were occurring at home which made it necessary for the former to act with more decision upon this subject than, perhaps, he intended at first. Mr. Whitefield had collected some money for the school at Kingswood, which he originally designed for the children of the colliers. But he had done little, except perform the ceremony of laying the first stone of the building, before he had undertaken his second Trans-Atlantic voyage, and the care of this good work had devolved on Mr. Wesley. Having become responsible for the debt incurred by the erection, he had employed two masters, as soon as the house was fit to receive them, one of whom was John Cennick, a lay-preacher, whose name makes a conspicuous figure in this controversy. Cennick, in his ultra zeal against the doctrines that were preached by his employer and friend, wrote earnestly to Mr. Whitefield, to hasten home from America, that he might stay the plague which was spreading with such alarming rapidity. When a copy of this letter had been put, by some means, into Mr. Wesley's hands, he was considerably hurt by the observations it contained—and, after minutely inquiring into Cennick's conduct, he was convinced not only that he had acted a highly improper part, in reference to his brother and himself, but that he was also endangering the peace of the Society—and, under these views, he

expelled Cennick and his adherents from the Band Society at Kingswood. That Mr. Wesley was not influenced in this affair by the principles which the Calvinistic party held, but by the practices of tale-bearing and evil speaking in which they allowed themselves, will appear evident from this fact: When one of their leaders said that the true cause of their expulsion was their holding the doctrine of election, Mr. Wesley replied, "You know in your conscience it is not. There are several predestinarians in our Societies both at London and Bristol; nor did I ever yet put any one out of either, because he held that opinion." The Calvinistic party then offered to break up their separate meeting, provided he would receive and employ Mr. Cennick as he had formerly done: but to this proposal Mr. Wesley answered, "My brother has wronged me much: but he doth not say, I repent:" and when Cennick persevered in his obstinacy, and withdrew, about half the meeting followed him.

While these things were going forward at Kingswood, Mr. Whitefield was on his way from America. When he arrived in London, Charles Wesley was there, and their meeting was both tender and affectionate. "It would have melted any heart," says Mr. Whitefield, "to have heard us weeping after prayer, that, if possible, the breach might be prevented." The feelings of former days returned upon him with such force, and their revival in his

mind was so powerful, that he promised never to preach against the Wesleys, whatever his private opinion might be. But Mr. Whitefield, notwithstanding his great oratorical powers and affectionate disposition, was not a man of sound judgment or discretion, and several circumstances had combined to unhinge his mind as soon as he had returned to Europe. As he had adopted all the peculiarities of the Calvinian school, he had lost all relish for the works of some of the brightest ornaments of the Church of England. Though possessing no talents for composition, especially upon controversial subjects, he had the want of modesty, as well as of prudence, to write against Archbishop Tillotson's works, and the "Whole Duty of Man," and that in such intemperate language as gave very general offence, even to those who were otherwise favourable to his views. His popularity had also gone; and instead of the immense concourse of people that formerly assembled to hear him, his auditors were reduced to two or three hundred. At one of his sermons on Kennington Common, the former scene of his unrivalled popularity, scarcely one hundred persons were assembled to hear him. "Many, very many," says he, "of my spiritual children, who, at my last departure from England, would have plucked out their own eyes to have given me, are so prejudiced by the dear Messrs. Wesley's dressing up the doctrine of election in such horrible colours, that they will neither hear, see, nor give

me the least assistance; yea, some of them send threatening letters that God will speedily destroy me." He soon began, therefore, to consider his former friends not only as enemies to himself, but as being deeply infected with a dangerous heresy. He forgot that the change was in himself, and that his "spiritual children" were only adhering to those doctrines which he had at first taught them, and had preached with such incredible effect in the beginning of his ministry. When Mr. Wesley therefore arrived in London afterwards, and went to see him, in order that the breach between them might, if possible, be healed, Mr. Whitefield told him, that they preached two different gospels, and refused not only to join with him, or to give him the right hand of fellowship, but said that he would preach publicly against him in every place that he preached at all. And being reminded by Mr. Hall, who was present, of the promise which he had so recently made, that whatever his opinion might be he would not do this, he replied, that that promise was only an effect of human weakness, and that he was now of another mind.

Irritated by the loss of his former popularity, and soured by the tales and misrepresentations of some of his adherents, he wrote to Mr. Wesley, complaining of the mismanagement of some matters during his absence in America: but upon these points the latter was able to give him the most ample satisfaction. "Would you have me deal

plainly with you, my brother?" said Mr. Wesley, "I believe you would: then, by the grace of God I will. Of many things I find you are not rightly informed; of others you speak what you have not well weighed. The Society room at Bristol, you say, is adorned. How? Why, with a piece of green cloth nailed to the desk; two sconces for eight candles, each in the middle; and —— nay, I know no more. Now, which of these can be spared I know not, nor would I desire either more adorning or less. But lodgings are made for me and my brother. That is, in plain English, there is a little room by the school, where I speak to the persons who come to me; and a garret in which a bed is placed for me. And do you grudge me this? Is this the voice of my brother, my son, Whitefield?" But, having replied to several matters which Mr. Whitefield had charged against him, he proceeds: "You rank all maintainers of universal redemption with Socinians themselves. Alas! my brother, do you not know even this, that the Socinians allow no redemption at all? that Socinus himself speaks thus: *Tota redemptio nostra per Christum metaphora;* and says expressly, Christ did not die as a ransom for any, but only as an example for all mankind? How easy were it for me to hit many other palpable blots in that which you call an answer to my sermon! And how, above measure, contemptible would you then appear to all impartial men, either of sense or learning! But I spare

you! mine hand shall not be upon you: the Lord be judge between thee and me. The general tenor both of my public and private exhortations, when I touch thereon at all, as even my enemies know, if they would testify, is, 'Spare the young man, even Absalom, for my sake.'"

The natural result of this controversy was a separation between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield, with their respective followers. Some of the largest places of worship in England, except those of the Established Church, were afterwards erected by Mr. Whitefield, in some of which the liturgy was used, and in others entirely neglected. Many of the congregations, however, that he formed have become Independents; though others do not strictly follow that plan of church government.

In the person of Mr. Howel Harris, a Welsh gentleman, whose eccentricities have often become the subject of severe animadversion, Mr. Whitefield found a warm friend, as well as a zealous supporter of his cause. This gentleman, whose sincerity and generosity were without a rival, was born in the same year with Mr. Whitefield himself. He entered at St. Mary's Hall, in Oxford, but possessing the warm temperament of an ancient Briton, he left the University for the purpose of becoming a field-preacher. "His youthful mind," says Mr. Middleton, in his Ecclesiastical Memoirs, "was penetrated with a deep concern for the salvation of immortal souls, but effervesced with a zeal, which, in the

graduated scale of religious feeling, occasionally approached the fever heat of enthusiasm." His eccentricities exposed him to the malevolent hostility of his enemies. Having therefore experienced some persecution, he resolved to establish a religious family at Upper Trevecca, in Brecknockshire, erecting a suitable house for the accommodation of its members, and devoting the proceeds of his property to the support of the institution. He peopled the surrounding manufactories and farms with persons like-minded as those who inhabited the newly-erected mansion: and during his life a spirit of unanimity and harmony prevailed among the members of this community. He scarcely survived Mr. Whitefield three years, and at his death left the whole of his property to the support of this institution, "subject to his own regulations, under two trustees, who were to be residents of the mansion, and exercise a patriarchal authority over the dependency."

But the most zealous and influential friend to Calvinistic Methodism was the celebrated Lady Huntingdon, whose proceedings make so prominent a figure in the religious history of those times. She was the daughter of Washington, second Earl Ferrers: born on the twenty-fourth of August, 1707. The sight of a youthful corpse made a serious impression upon her mind, when she was about nine years of age; and after her marriage with the Earl of Huntingdon, she was introduced

to his sisters, the Ladies Betty and Margaret Hastings, who gave her seriousness a Methodistic turn. During the life of her husband she was unable to indulge as freely as she wished in taking an active part in matters of religion. However, after his death, she opened her house in Park-street, for religious worship—cultivated an acquaintance with such of the clergy as were of her own way of thinking—and, through the intervention of Mr. Harris, she became a warm admirer and zealous friend of Mr. Whitefield; appointed him her chaplain; and ever after took an interest in the prosperity of his cause.

Presuming on her right as a peeress of the realm, Lady Huntingdon erected chapels in different places of fashionable resort, and hoped to evade the charge of giving countenance to dissent, by employing none but the regular clergy to officiate in them. But circumstances occurring, which brought the question between her Ladyship and the Established Church to a point, her divines drew up a confession of faith, which was highly Calvinistic; and having obtained the signature of all the ministers in her connexion to this creed, they proceeded to the exercise of Presbyterian ordination, but retained the use of the liturgy with some slight alterations: and her seminary in Wales, being broken up for want of funds, as well as by the expiration of the lease, they formed a more extensive establishment of a similar nature at Chesnut,

in Hertfordshire. In this seminary, notwithstanding a predilection was preserved in favour of the Established Church, many of the students have joined the Dissenters of various denominations; and some have become the founders of various congregations, formed after their own views and apprehensions.

The early division which was brought about by a difference of opinion between the founders of Methodism, it must be admitted, was attended with consequences that pious men of both parties would be disposed to deplore. However, it has been justly remarked, that, while man is ever prone to bring evil out of good, it is the prerogative of Infinite Wisdom to bring good out of evil. Mr. Whitefield's Calvinism was the means of introducing him to the Presbyterians of North Britain, as well as to the Independents of some of the States of North America; and among all these he was eminently successful in raising the tone of religious feeling, and spreading the influence of vital godliness wherever he went. Amongst the inhabitants of Scotland, Arminianism, as it was called, was considered a heresy of no common magnitude; and had Mr. Whitefield continued to hold the doctrine of general redemption, it would probably have impeded his usefulness to a considerable degree in that country. But the part which he took in this controversy was the means of opening a door for him to preach the gospel to the Scottish

Presbyterians, and thousands heard him without prejudice, and were profited by his ministry, who would certainly have turned away from him in disgust, had his sentiments been, in their estimation, less orthodox. His peculiar opinions also recommended him to the Calvinists of America, and there thousands upon thousands attended his ministry afterwards, to whom he faithfully preached repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Forgetting the heat and animosity which were naturally excited in the beginning of the controversy, he preached the gospel in its purity, notwithstanding his Calvinistic tenets, to applauding and profited thousands; and thus the evils of separation were over-ruled by Divine Wisdom, and made subservient to God's purposes of mercy towards those who could not have been otherwise reached, at least by the ministry of this excellent man.

By this separation between these two eminent ministers of Christ, they had also an opportunity of showing to the world, that mutual love and genuine piety are very compatible with a difference of opinion. The controversy between them had for a time issued in a temporary estrangement: but neither of them possessed a heart in which resentment could ever strike root. It is true, upon the doctrine in dispute, they could never be reconciled, and their respective followers were even less charitable than themselves, yet the breach

between them was so far healed that in January, 1750, they preached in each other's chapels, and seemed to forget that they stood in any relation to each other but that of fellow-labourers in the vineyard of Christ.*

The kindness and affection of Mr. Whitefield's heart were also evinced, about three years after this occurrence, when Mr. Wesley was threatened with consumption, brought on by repeated attacks of cold, and was considered by his friends to be almost beyond the hope of recovery. It would be unjust to the character of that excellent man not to insert the following letter which he wrote to his old friend and fellow-labourer, upon that trying occasion, notwithstanding all the controversial bickering that had passed between them:—

"*Bristol, Dec.* 3, 1753.

"REV. AND VERY DEAR SIR,

"If seeing you so weak when leaving London distressed me, the news and prospect of your approaching dissolution have quite weighed me down. I pity myself and the church, but not you. A radiant throne awaits you, and ere

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* In reference to this, Mr. Wesley observes in his journals:—"Friday, 19th.—In the evening I read prayers in West-street, and Mr. Whitefield preached a plain, affectionate discourse. Sunday, 21—He read prayers, and I preached. Sunday, 28—I read prayers, and Mr. Whitefield preached. How wise is God, in giving different talents to different preachers! So by the blessing of God, one more stumbling-block is removed."

long you will enter into your Master's joy. Yonder he stands with a massy crown, ready to put it on your head, amidst an admiring throng of saints and angels. But I, poor I, that have been waiting for my dissolution these nineteen years, must be left behind to grovel here below! Well, this is my comfort: it cannot be long ere the chariots will be sent even for worthless me. If prayers can detain them, even you, Rev. and very dear Sir, shall not leave us yet; but if the decree is gone forth, that you must now fall asleep in Jesus, may he kiss your soul away, and give you to die in the embraces of triumphant love. If in the land of the dying, I hope to pay my last respects to you next week. If not, Rev. and very dear Sir, f-a-r-e-w-e-ll. *Ego sequar, etsi non passibus æquis.* My heart is too big, tears trickle down too fast, and you are, I fear, too weak for me to enlarge. Underneath you may there be Christ's everlasting arms! I commend you to his never-failing mercy, and am,

"Rev. and very dear Sir,

"Your most affectionate, sympathising, and afflicted

"Younger Brother in the Gospel of our common Lord,

G. WHITEFIELD."

Mr. Whitefield died in America, and in his last will, written with his own hand, he makes use of these remarkable words:—"I leave a mourning ring to my honoured and dear friends, and distinguished fellow-labourers, the Rev. Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, in token of my indissoluble union with them in heart and Christian affection, notwithstanding our difference in judgment about some particular points of doctrine." Some time previous to his death, he also requested that Mr John Wesley should be employed to preach his

funeral sermon, which was accordingly done, at the Tabernacle, Moorfields, in a manner as creditable to the preacher as to the deceased; and Mr. Charles Wesley published a poetical tribute, to the memory of a friend whom he loved with so much sincerity, and valued so highly as a servant of Christ.

Mr. Whitefield's character cannot be too highly appreciated as a man of piety and extensive usefulness. He was a much more eloquent and pathetic preacher than Mr. Wesley; and, perhaps for the time he laboured, he was the instrument of as much immediate utility amongst those who were the objects of his care and solicitude. But he possessed no talent for the formation and government of religious societies; and consequently his system, if such it could be called, was not of that permanent and durable character, which, by the wisdom of Mr. Wesley, was established amongst the Wesleyan Methodists. Mr. Whitefield himself was sensible of this; and, upon different occasions, seemed to form a just estimate of the value of class-meeting, and of the different peculiarities of the Methodist Society. Though differing from him in doctrine upon a variety of points, in which we take the same view that Mr. Wesley did, we cannot consider him inferior to the latter in piety, zeal, and even extensive usefulness, if we carry our views no farther than merely to the effects which were produced by the sermons of these two excellent and eminent men.

CHAPTER IV.

ORGANIZATION OF METHODISM.

MARTIN LUTHER, when he first began to reprobate the sale of indulgences, little thought that the course he was pursuing was a preliminary step to his total separation from the Church of Rome, and to his giving such a blow to the papal hierarchy as will render it for ever incapable of recovering its ancient power and uncontrolled dominion over the minds and consciences of men. Nor is any man, employed in a great and general movement in religion, how wise and pious soever he may be, able to foresee the lengths to which he may be led, by a chain of events that had never entered into his contemplation. Mr. Wesley as little imagined, while he was forming religious societies, and insisting on all the members thereof to be regular in their attendance upon the church and its ordinances, that his doing so was connected with that power which he subsequently possessed of receiving into a religious connexion some hundreds of preachers, or of dismissing any or all of them

as he thought proper to determine. But such was the fact, as appears from the progressive history of Methodism.

As the circumstances which led to the organization of the Methodist Connexion were not brought about by any premeditated plan of its founder, they were considered by him and his associates as purely providential. Being, at an early period of his progress, refused by most clergymen the use of their pulpits, he was driven, by a sense of duty, to preach in the open air. But field preaching, in a climate like ours, not being at all times practicable, and prayer-meetings being also a part of his plan, it was soon found expedient to erect houses for the use of the religious societies which were then formed by his instrumentality. These chapels required not only funds, but, as he was engaged in a course of itinerancy, they wanted a regular supply of preachers to occupy the pulpits in his absence. Several clergymen had, at first, co-operated with him, but for various reasons they had gradually withdrawn from a system of labour that was beyond their physical powers, and which, probably, appeared to them to be inconsistent with that regularity and order which, as churchmen, they were bound to observe: and, notwithstanding, he was opposed at first to the very idea of admitting laymen to the important office of preaching the gospel, yet such was the obvious necessity of the case, that he was ultimately

obliged to submit to it—and, at length, a system of lay-itinerancy became an essential part of the organization of his Connexion.

The city of Bristol, the *alma mater* of Methodism, is now considered the second city in England, both with regard to its extent and commercial pursuits. In this city, as already observed, the first Methodist chapel having been erected, Mr. Wesley had made himself responsible for the expenses of the building ; and after subscriptions and public collections had been made for the purpose of liquidating the debt, it was found that there was still a considerable sum due upon the premises. A meeting was therefore convened to consult with Mr. Wesley concerning the best method of paying off the arrears. One of the members present proposed that every individual in the society should contribute a penny a week, till the whole was paid. It was observed that many of them were poor, and could not afford it. "Then," said the proposer, "put eleven of the poorest with me, and if they can give any thing, well: I will call on them weekly, and if they can give nothing, I will give for them as well as for myself. And each of you call upon eleven of your neighbours weekly, receive what they give, and make up what is wanting." This plan immediately met with the approbation of the meeting. It was accordingly agreed that every member of the Society, who was able, should contribute a penny a week, till the

whole debt should be discharged: that the Society should be divided into little companies or classes, about twelve in each class; and that one person in each of these companies should receive the contributions of the rest, and bring it to the stewards weekly. About a month after this a similar distribution of the Society into classes was made in London, though for a different purpose. "I appointed," says Mr. Wesley, "several earnest and sensible men to meet me, to whom I showed the great difficulty I had long found, of knowing the people who desired to be under my care. After much discourse, they all agreed there could be no better way to come to a sure, thorough knowledge of each person, than to divide them into classes like those at Bristol, under the inspection of those in whom I could most confide. This was the origin of our classes in London, for which I can never sufficiently praise God: the unspeakable usefulness of the institution having ever since been more and more manifest."

The persons appointed to visit and watch over these classes respectively, were called *leaders;* and in the course of their weekly visits, they discovered some irregularities in the conduct of the members committed to their care, and reported it accordingly to Mr. Wesley. The advantage arising from such an arrangement was so obvious, that he said this was the very thing which he had long wanted to effect. By this means, he observes,

"many disorderly walkers were detected; some turned from the evil of their ways; some were put away from us; many saw it with fear, and rejoiced unto God with reverence."

When the plan was first adopted the leaders went once a week to every member's house; but this was soon found not only to be inconvenient, but even impracticable. It required more time than the leaders could spare: many persons lived with masters, mistresses, or relations, where they could not be visited perhaps with prudence—and when misunderstandings had arisen between persons in the same class, it was found more convenient to see them face to face. From these, and some other considerations, it was agreed that each leader should meet his class all together once a week, at a time and place most convenient for the whole. He began and ended the meeting with singing and prayer, and spent about an hour in conversing with those present, one by one. By this means, a more perfect inquiry was made into the behaviour of every person; advice or reproof was given, as it appeared necessary, and misunderstandings were removed, if any existed between the members of the class. This was the origin of what the Methodists call *Class-Meeting*, and "it can scarcely be conceived," says Mr. Wesley, "what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation."

Providence having led to this essential part of

the Methodist discipline, when the members increased and societies began to be multiplied, Mr. Wesley found it necessary to adopt some additional regulations, in order to ascertain who belonged to the Society, and to prevent improper persons from imposing upon him. To every one, therefore, of whose seriousness and good conversation he had no doubt, he gave a *ticket*, upon which was printed a short portion of Scripture, and upon which he wrote the date and person's name; and this was to be a certificate that such an individual was acknowledged a member of the Society. These tickets were renewed every quarter; and as this was done by the preacher himself, his meeting each little company, for the purpose of renewing their tickets, was called visiting the classes. This method facilitated the removal of disorderly members, who were refused their tickets, and then it was known they did not belong to the Society.

By the united efforts of the two brothers and their assistants, several of these societies were formed in London, Bristol, Newcastle, and elsewhere: but notwithstanding they were established on principles exactly similar, no general rules had for some time been made to govern the whole. To supply this defect, in 1742, Messrs. John and Charles Wesley met and drew up a set of rules, which are in force to the present time, and the observance of which was then, and still continues to be, the only condition of membership.

The United Society, as they now denominated it, was defined to be "no other than a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness; united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation." The general rules were then laid down, as a means for more easily discerning whether the members were indeed thus employed; but, as they are so well known, it would be quite superfluous to insert them in this place. "It may only be observed," as one of Mr. Wesley's biographers remarks, "that they enjoin no peculiar opinions, and relate entirely to moral conduct, to charitable offices, and to the observance of the ordinances of God. Churchmen or Dissenters, walking by these rules, might become and remain members of these societies, provided they held their doctrinal views and disciplinary prepossessions in peace and charity. The sole object of the union was to assist the members to 'make their calling and election sure,' by cultivating the religion of the heart, and a holy conformity to the laws of Christ."

When the Messrs. Wesley and Whitefield first began to preach in the fields and other places in the open air, and to travel about throughout different parts of England for that purpose, the practice was then novel to the people, but not without many respectable precedents in former times. The most

ancient itinerancy for promoting a revival of religion that we have on record, is that which was established by Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, in the third year of his reign. We are informed that "he sent to his princes, even to Ben-hail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. And with them he sent Levites, even Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah, Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, priests. And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people. And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphet."

It was by itinerancy the gospel was first introduced into every country by the Apostles and their successors; and it has been generally found that no great work has ever been effected in the Christian Church without adopting this plan in a greater or less degree. The Anglo-Saxon bishops were accustomed to itinerate throughout their respective dioceses, and where there were no churches, to preach in the open air.

The same observations may be applied to the clergy of the ancient Irish Church. The converts having no fixed chapels or pastors, the latter were

sent to instruct them occasionally, and the place of meeting was always where such assemblies were usually held in times of Paganism, at upright or pyramidal stones, or in stone circles. These upright stones were, by an easy operation of carving a cross on them, converted from a Heathen to a Christian symbol; and they served for churches both among the Saxons and the Irish.

Nor was the custom of itinerancy entirely given up after the salutary regulation of dividing every diocese into parochial districts was adopted. The different orders of mendicant friars pursued the same line of conduct; and in the reign of Edward the Sixth, the reformers deemed it necessary to send out preachers upon a similar plan, who sometimes preached every day in the week. It was even in contemplation at that time to establish a regular system of itinerancy in addition to the parochial clergy in England, and to have some persons in every diocese who should take their circuit and preach like Evangelists, as some of the friends of the Reformation denominated them.

Notwithstanding this plan was not carried into effect at that time, it was tried in England during the Commonwealth. But in Mr. Wesley's days, the practice had been discontinued for more than seventy years, and it had therefore all the effect of novelty when it was revived. The crowds who attended his sermons were for the most part attracted by curiosity at first, but went away from

the place with lasting impressions made on their minds of the importance of eternal things. A Cornish man said once to him, "Twelve years ago I was going over Gulvan Downs, and I saw many people together; and I asked what was the matter? They told me a man going to preach. And I said, to be sure it is some 'mazed man! But when I saw you, I said, nay, this is no 'mazed man. And you preached on God's raising the dry bones: and from that time I could never rest till God was pleased to breathe on me, and raise my dead soul!"

By the itinerant plan connected with field-preaching Mr. Wesley was brought more immediately in contact with the lower and ruder classes of society, whom he might otherwise in vain have wished to address: and few men have ever seen so many affecting instances of the immediate good whereof they were the instruments. "A man nearly four-score years of age, and notorious in his neighbourhood for cursing, swearing, and drunkenness, was one day among his chance hearers, and one of the company, perhaps with a feeling like that of the Pharisee in the parable, was offended at his presence. But, when Mr. Wesley had concluded his discourse, the old man came up to him, and catching him by the hands, said, 'Whether thou art a good or a bad man I know not; but I know the words thou speakest are good! I never heard the like in all

my life. Oh that God would set them home upon my poor soul!' And then he burst into tears, so that he could speak no more." The effects that were sometimes produced by his preaching were truly surprising. At Bristol and other places thousands were cut to the heart by his pointed and impressive discourses; and, in some instances, evinced such anguish of soul as it would be impossible to describe in an adequate manner. That persons of weak nerves and ardent feelings should sometimes evince an extravagance of expression and even of conduct, under such an unusual method of preaching the gospel, is not matter of surprise: but that lasting and substantial good was done, is established most indisputably by the permanent reformation of the profligate and profane.

As Methodism had been opposed from the beginning by the ecclesiastical authorities, and those little societies which Mr. Wesley had formed discountenanced by their own pastors in the church, the only "expedient," he says, "that remained was to find some one among themselves, who was upright of heart, and of sound judgment in the things of God, and to desire him to meet the rest as often as he could, in order to confirm them, as he was able, in the ways of God, either by reading to them, or by prayer, or by exhortation." Accordingly he left Cennick at Kingswood, in the capacity of a leader or exhorter, and to a young man named Thomas Maxfield he committed the

charge of the society in London. The transition from the duty of expounding to that of preaching was very easy; and Maxfield soon began to preach with such signal abilities as astonished all his auditors. Even the Countess of Huntingdon expressed her wonder at his talents; and doubted not but he was an instrument chosen by God for the work of the ministry. His preaching, however, was soon represented to Mr. Wesley as an act of unprecedented irregularity, and as his presence was required to put a stop to it, he hastened to London for that purpose. His mother lived at that time in his house adjoining the Foundery, and she perceiving marks of displeasure in his countenance when he arrived, inquired the cause. He replied, "Thomas Maxfield has turned preacher, I find." Mrs. Wesley looked at him seriously, and said, "John, you know what my sentiments have been; you cannot suspect me of favouring readily any thing of this kind; but take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself." Mr. Wesley took the advice: went and heard Maxfield preach, and expressed at once his satisfaction and his sanction, by saying, "It is the Lord. Let him do what seemeth Him good."

The lawfulness of permitting a layman to preach or expound the Scriptures is a subject which enters

into the very essence of Methodism; and is one which admits of much to be said on both sides of the question. Among the Jews, the line of demarcation between the priesthood and the laity was much greater than that which exists under the gospel dispensation: the family, the age, and the qualifications of those that might serve at the altar, were very particularly set forth; and yet, in the Jewish church, they had no objection to the public instruction of laymen. It is said, by the prophet Malachi, that "the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts:" consequently the priests were the accredited and legitimate instructors of the people, and yet the prophets, who constantly addressed them, were indiscriminately from every tribe without any pretensions to the sacerdotal character. Many learned men have been of opinion that the Christian church was modelled after the fashion of the Jewish, but that it was rather from the form of the synagogue worship, than from the service of the temple, the apostles took the pattern for the hierarchy they established in every place. The ruler of the synagogue corresponded with our bishop, the elders with our priests, and the ministers or attendants with the deacons of a Christian church. But, be this as it may, it is a remarkable fact that in these places of worship the principle of lay-preaching was every where adopted by the Jews.

"It was customary," says Bishop Mann, "when any grave person went into the synagogue, to invite him to read a portion of Scripture and expound it." Hence we find our Blessed Lord teaching in the synagogues wherever he went; and it was in that of Nazareth that he delivered his first public discourse, having had the book of the prophet Esaias delivered to him for that purpose by the deacon or minister. When Paul and his company visited Antioch in Pisidia, we are told they "went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. And, after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Thus were they not only permitted, but requested by the rulers of this place of worship to address the people.

Nor are there wanting instances to support the principle under a better and more glorious dispensation, and those with the concurrence and approbation of episcopal authority itself. According to the earliest of our ecclesiastical historians, in the third century, Origen going out of Alexandria into Palestine, was desired by the bishops of that country to preach in the churches, though at that time he had not received holy orders: and when Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria, was offended because of a line of conduct which he considered as unprecedented, the principle of lay-preaching was main-

tained by Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, and Theoctistus of Cæsarea, who in a joint letter to their brother of Alexandria, made use of these remarkable words: "Whereas you write in your letter that it was never before seen or done that laymen should preach in the presence of bishops, therein you err from the truth: for wherever any are found that are fit to profit the brethren, the holy bishops of their own accord ask them to preach unto the people. So Evelpis was desired by Neon, bishop of Laranda, and Paulinus by Celsus of Iconium, and Theodorus by Atticus of Synnada, our most blessed brethren; and it is credible that this is likewise done in other places, though we know it not."

Bishop Burnet, in his exposition of the twenty-third article of the Church of England, observes, that it "is put in very general words, far from that magisterial stiffness in which some have taken upon them to dictate in this matter." And amongst the different reasons which he assigns for this moderation, he says: "Our Reformers had also in view two famous instances in church history of laymen that had preached and converted nations to the faith. It is true, they came, as they ought to have done, to be regularly ordained, and were sent to such as had authority so to do: So Frumentius preached to the Indians, and was afterwards made a priest and a bishop by Athanasius: The king of the Iberians, before he was baptized himself, did

convert his subjects; and, as says the historian, he became the apostle of his country before he himself was *initiated.* It is indeed added, that he sent an embassy to Constantine the emperor, desiring him that he would send priests for the further establishment of the faith there."

It does not appear from the period of her reformation that the Church of England ever gave any direct, authoritative sanction to the practice of lay-preaching; except that her professing to follow the primitive church in that age, when it is well known the custom was permitted, might be considered as amounting to so much. It is true that, for many years subsequent to the Reformation, the service was left to be performed in many of the churches by laymen, but this arose out of the necessity of the times rather than from any direct appointment of the ecclesiastical authorities.—Besides, much was done by individual exertion at that period, by persons who deemed their own strong sense of duty a sufficient qualification for the office of strengthening their brethren in the ways of evangelical truth and practical religion; but it is to be observed, that they did it upon their own responsibility, and were perfectly volunteers in the field which lay before them. Some of them suffered for their zeal, but this was generally upon account of the doctrines they preached, and not because of the want of authority in the preacher.

It may however be remarked, that the church of

Rome, the most tenacious in the world of the prerogatives of the priesthood, has often permitted her lay-brothers to go a mission, as they term it; and it is well known that all Presbyterian churches, particularly that which is established in Scotland, continue to license men to preach before their ordination, and that some remain for many years in a state of probation as lay-preachers.

The practice, therefore, to which Mr. Wesley submitted at first, was not so unprecedented as some of its censors endeavoured to make it appear at a subsequent period: but had his mind not been satisfied by what he had observed connected with Maxfield's conduct, his determination would probably have been fixed by the service of another labourer, who in like manner anticipated the system about the same time. A mason from Yorkshire, named John Nelson, had become acquainted with the Methodists in London, and returning to his native place had commenced preaching to his neighbours, in which he was encouraged by the Rev. Mr. Ingham, after he had examined him with the closest exactness touching his knowledge and Christian experience. This honest and faithful man had been brought up under a pious father: married early and happily; and lived with his wife, he says, "in a good way, as the world calls it: that is, in peace and plenty, and love to each other." But, as soon as he was convinced of his fallen state by nature, and the extent to which the spiritual juris-

diction of the law of God extends, his religious impressions brought him into a state of mind that was of the most deplorable description. He sometimes wished that he had never been born; and thought rather than live thirty years more like the thirty he had passed, that he would choose to be strangled.

In this state of mind, Nelson went to hear preachers of different denominations, but could find no comfort for his soul. When he heard Mr. Whitefield at Moorfields, he observes himself, "He was to me as a man that could play well on an instrument, for his preaching was pleasant to me, and I loved the man; so that if any one offered to disturb him, I was ready to fight for him, but I did not understand him; yet I got some hope of mercy, so that I was encouraged to pray on, and spend my leisure hours in reading the Scriptures." In this way he continued till Mr. Wesley preached for the first time in Moorfields. "Oh!" says he, "that was a blessed morning for my soul! As soon as he got upon the stand, he stroked back his hair and turned his face towards where I stood, and I thought he fixed his eyes on me. His countenance struck such an awful dread upon me before I heard him speak, that it made my heart beat like the pendulum of a clock; and when he did speak, I thought his whole discourse was aimed at me." As soon as Mr. Wesley had finished this sermon, Nelson said within himself, "This man can tell the

secrets of my heart. He hath not left me there, for he hath showed the remedy, even the blood of Jesus." His friends, from this period, began to think that he was about to go to an extreme in religion, and that he would bring ruin upon himself and his family: they therefore wished he had never heard Mr. Wesley; "but I told them," says he, "I had reason to bless God that ever he was born, for by hearing him I was made sensible that my business in this world is to get well out of it; and as for my trade, health, wisdom, and all things in this world, they are no blessings to me any farther than as so many instruments to help me, by the grace of God, to work out my salvation."

After this extraordinary man had returned to Birstall, his native place, and had informed his wife and mother of the important change that had taken place in his religious experience, they entreated him not to tell any one about what he felt, for no one would believe him. But, he said that he should not be ashamed to tell what God had done for his soul, if he could speak loud enough for all the men in the world to hear him at once. "Your head is turned," said his mother. "Yes," he replied, "and my heart too, I thank the Lord." "The wife besought him that he would either leave off abusing his neighbours, or go back to London; but he declared that it was his determination to reprove any one who sinned in his presence; she began to weep, and said he did not love her so well as he

used to do, and that her happiness was over, if he believed her to be a child of the devil, and himself a child of God. But Nelson told her he prayed and believed God would make her a blessed companion for him in the way to heaven; and she, who was a good wife, and knew that she had a good husband, soon fell in with his wishes, listened to his teaching, and became as zealous in the cause as himself."

Such was the change produced in Birstall, in a short time, by the preaching of this plain, honest man, that some of the greatest profligates had been turned from the evil of their ways, and a general reformation was effected amongst the inhabitants of the place. When Mr. Wesley soon after visited Yorkshire, he found a preacher and a congregation that had been raised up without his interference, which fully confirmed him in his opinion that if good were done, it was of little consequence who the instrument was; and he was therefore led to make more use of the services of laymen than he had hitherto done.

The growing demand for additional labourers to carry on the work in which he was engaged, induced Mr. Wesley to employ several laymen to preach in different places, which neither he nor his brother was able to attend. Upon the employment of such instruments as these, he makes the following observations to a clergyman who had objected to the whole of his proceedings in this particular

instance. "We have done nothing rashly, nothing without deep and long consideration, (hearing and weighing all objections,) and much prayer. Nor have we taken one deliberate step, of which we, as yet, see reason to repent. It is true, in some things we vary from the rules of our church; but no further than, we apprehend, is our bounden duty. It is from a full conviction of this that we preach abroad, use extemporary prayer, form those who appear to be awakened into societies, and permit laymen, whom we believe God has called, to preach. I say *permit*, because we ourselves have hitherto viewed it in no other light. This we are clearly satisfied that we *may* do; that we *may do more*, we are not satisfied. It is not clear to us that Presbyters, so circumstanced as we are, may *appoint* or *ordain* others; but it is, that we may *direct*, as well as *suffer* them to do, what we conceive they are *moved to by the Holy Ghost*. It is true that, in *ordinary* cases, both an *inward* and *outward* call are requisite; but, we apprehend, there is something far from *ordinary* in the present case; and, upon the calmest view of things, we think that they who are only called of God, and not of man, have *more* right to preach than they who are only called of man and not of God."

But, whatever may be thought by some of that measure by which a lay-itinerancy was established, certain it is, from the accounts transmitted to us of the first lay preachers, that they were in general

deeply pious and eminently useful men. Some of them were respectable for abilities, both natural and acquired; but the most distinguishing, as well as the best traits in their character, were unaffected piety, seriousness, industry, and an ardent zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of mankind. Their success in reclaiming sinners from the error of their ways, was every where truly astonishing. Finding the people in general ignorant, careless, and immoral, they preached repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, with incredible success. It is but candid to acknowledge that several of them knew little more than this themselves; not having time or opportunity for the study of any regular system of divinity. But perhaps this acknowledged defect was overruled by infinite wisdom for the promotion of vital and experimental religion. The simplicity of their manners, and in many cases the homeliness of their style, rendered them better understood by the people, especially by the poor, than they would have been had they possessed what some reckon essential requisites for the ministry. By regularly attending the service of the church themselves, and frequently quoting passages from its liturgy, homilies, and articles, in support of the doctrines which they advanced, they removed much of that prejudice from the minds of their hearers, which might otherwise have prevailed against them; and no doubt thousands who are now their companions in glory were on earth the fruits of their labour.

One instance, and not an uncommon one, may serve to show the tenderness of conscience by which they were generally influenced. Thomas Olivers, a Welshman, who had in early life been almost a proverb for wickedness, was converted under a sermon preached by Mr. Whitefield, and afterwards became an itinerant preacher in Mr. Wesley's connexion. In the earlier period of the history of Methodism, the life of a travelling preacher was one that was both laborious and perilous. In Yarmouth he had been attacked by a mob, and escaped with his life, amidst a tremendous discharge of stones, turnips, potatoes, and various other articles of mob ammunition. Discouraged by such treatment, and still more so by seeing so little fruit of his labour, he was one day, in a fit of dejection, tempted to think that he had not been called to the work in which he was engaged. This temptation assailed him with peculiar force while he was sitting at dinner. He therefore began to reflect that the food with which he was then served, in the character of a preacher sent by God, did not belong to him, and that he was a thief and a robber in eating it. He immediately burst into tears, and was unable to eat any more, his mind was so powerfully exercised by the train of thinking into which he had been led. In a little time after, having to preach, he went weeping all the way to the place; and when he had ascended the pulpit, he continued to weep during the whole

service. The congregation were impressed with the solemnity of his discourse, and began to cry "aloud for the disquietness of their souls." This Mr. Olivers took for an indication that God was with him, and approved of his labour. He was therefore relieved from the anxiety of his mind, and resolved to devote himself more than ever to the work in which he was engaged.

The curious account which this excellent man has given of his deliberations concerning marriage, will serve to show that, while simplicity and tenderness of conscience marked the character of the first Methodist preachers, they were not enthusiasts who would lay aside the rules of common prudence, and trust to the miraculous interposition of Providence in the conduct of their affairs. "Setting out," he says, "with a conviction that in this important concern young people did not consult reason and the will of God, so much as their own foolish inclinations," he inquired of himself, in the first place, whether he was called to marry at that time; and, having settled that question in the affirmative, the next inquiry was, what sort of a person ought he to marry? The remainder is too extraordinary and too characteristic to be given in any words but his own:—To this I answered in general, such a one as Christ would choose for me, suppose he was on earth, and was to undertake that business. I then asked, but what sort of a person have I reason to believe he would choose for me?

Here I fixed on the following properties, and ranged them in the following order:—The first was grace: I was quite certain that no preacher of God's word ought, on any consideration, to marry one who is not eminently gracious.—Secondly, she ought to have tolerable good common sense: a Methodist preacher, in particular, who travels into all parts, and sees such a variety of company, ought not to take a fool with him.—Thirdly, as I knew the natural warmth of my own temper, I concluded that a wise and gracious God would not choose a companion for ME, who would throw oil, but rather water upon the fire.—Fourthly, I judged that, as I was connected with a poor people, the will of God was, that whoever I married should have a small competency, to prevent her being chargeable to any." He then proceeds to say, that, upon the next step in the inquiry, who is the person in whom these properties are found? he immediately turned his eyes on Miss Green, 'a person of a good family, and noted for her extraordinary piety.' He opened his mind to her, consulted Mr. Wesley, married her; and having, 'in this affair, consulted reason and the will of God so impartially, had abundant reason to be thankful ever afterwards.' "

A few instances of this kind, with which the lives of the first Methodist preachers abound, may serve to give the reader a better idea of their real character than it would be possible to do by the

most lengthened description. They were men devoted to God; possessing the most implicit confidence in him for parental protection and parental support; but had they gone no farther than this, they might be judged to be what their enemies have represented them, a set of well-meaning but brain-sick enthusiasts: but while we find them possessing an unwavering trust in the providence of God, we may observe them as careful and prudential in employing legitimate means for accomplishing every good end, as the wisest and most philosophic amongst their adversaries. Men of this stamp could not fail to be useful in their day and generation: and if it be a truth that "he that winneth souls is wise," they gave abundant proofs that they possessed a large share of that "wisdom which is from above," in the numerous converts they made from sin to holiness, and from the power of Satan to the service of the living God. Their itinerant plan gave to the people the advantage of such various talents as tended much to their edification; and when they happened to have such preachers as were not generally acceptable, they were, by the system adopted, soon delivered from that inconvenience. Curiosity, which to a certain extent is innocent, was gratified by a frequent change of preachers; and it had also a tendency to increase the congregations; which are never so numerous when left to the stated ministry of one particular person.

CHAPTER V.

PERSECUTION OF THE FIRST METHODISTS.

PERHAPS no tenet of the Romish Church has contributed more extensively to disgust the thinking part of mankind with the Papal system than the right which she assumes of forcing men into her communion by corporal punishment. But whilst her members have been in the habit of acting with an awful consistency upon this subject, nothing is more disgraceful and inconsistent in a Protestant than to resort to any species of persecution towards those who may happen to differ with him in religious sentiments. From the beginning Methodism was obliged to struggle with two classes of opponents, one of which will ever exist in hostility to any description of men, whose piety and exemplary conversation form a striking contrast with their own licentious and profligate mode of living. And notwithstanding it is to the conduct of such persons we intend particularly to advert in this chapter, it will be necessary first to notice a class of opponents of a very different character,

in order to show the injustice of the insinuations of some by which they are confounded with those lawless mobs that attacked, at different times, the unoffending members of the Methodist Society.

In the infancy of Methodism, although the established clergy in general disapproved of it as a system of irregularity, the conduct of many of them was not only moderate, but even cordial, towards its founders. Dr. Gibson was at that time bishop of London; a man of a mild conciliating temper; a profound scholar; a distinguished antiquary; a pious and charitable Christian; and a consistent and orthodox churchman. Upon this prelate Messrs. John and Charles Wesley waited, as we have already observed, at an early period of their progress, and found him a man of decided moderation.

Nor did Archbishop Potter, upon whom both he and his brother waited soon afterwards, evince less regard for the important station in which he stood as a consistent churchman, and a Christian bishop. "He showed us," says Charles Wesley, "great affection, and cautioned us to 'give no more umbrage than was necessary for our own defence, to forbear exceptionable phrases, and to keep to the doctrines of the church.' We told him we expected persecution would abide by the church till her articles and homilies were repealed. He assured us he knew of no design in the governors of the church to innovate; neither

should there be any innovation while he lived." It was, probably, at this interview that his Grace gave Mr. Wesley an advice, for which he acknowledged, many years afterwards, that he had ever since had occasion to bless God: "If you desire to be extensively useful," said he, "do not spend your time and strength in contending for, or against, such things as are of a disputable nature; but in testifying against open, notorious vice—and in promoting real, essential holiness."

However, when Methodism was more perfectly organized, and it began to be feared that the irregularities of its founders would ultimately lead to a total separation from the church, the clergy subsequently altered their position with respect to its leaders, and marshalled themselves against it, no doubt from the most conscientious conviction of the propriety of the step they were taking. It was then urged that the irregularities which were practised in field-preaching and itinerancy, gave a disrelish to the people for the established forms of worship in the church; that Methodism produced a disaffection towards the established clergy, and nearly obliterated the line of demarcation between them and the laity; that it had a manifest tendency to bring into contempt those orders conferred by the sacred rite of ordination; and would eventually lead to a certain and unprincipled schism. But, on the other hand, it was maintained by its friends, that the good resulting from Methodism

was real, and was its natural consequence; whilst the evils ascribed to it were either imaginary or accidental, and not necessarily resulting from any of its doctrines or principles; that it had considerably raised the tone of religious feeling, roused the clergy to exertion, and promoted the cause of heart religion,—an object so desirable, but so little minded when Methodism took its rise. Upon its two leading founders, Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield, Mr. Middleton, in his Ecclesiastical Memoirs, justly observes: "They were comets whose orbits were highly eccentric, but they benefited the general system; and while the timid apprehended noxious exhalations from their approach, or the prejudiced regarded them as sidereal anomalies, they were carrying light and warmth into regions of darkness and frigidity, and constraining the observer, who was ignorant of their periodic times, to acknowledge their probable utility. By forcing their opponents to examine questions in divinity, they raised the tone of theological instruction. Some of the clergy became alive to the importance of their office, through the exhortations and example of the very characters whom they were taught by their superiors to regard as dangerous fanatics; and others were led from the mere proximity of a popular minister, to emulate his doctrine and diligence, and preach Christ, as it were, out of contention."

Amongst the clergy who withstood Methodism

from the beginning, it would be surprising if there were not some who disgraced the sacred profession by the use of unhallowed means in giving it opposition. But these were much fewer in number than the enemies of their order would wish the public to imagine. If out of the thousands of clergymen who belong to the Established Church in England, only fifty were capable of heading a mob, or using violent means to put down the growing enthusiam, as they termed it, such a number would make a very conspicuous figure in the history of those transactions: and, as Primitive Methodists, we know not whether our indignation should be kindled more, when we consider that by a relaxation of discipline, and the culpable negligence of the ecclesiastical authorities, such blemishes upon the purest and most tolerant church upon the earth, should find their way to the sacred office: or when we discover in the different publications of her adversaries that malice that would throw the odium of the conduct of such men upon the whole of the established clergy. Such statements, or rather insinuations, are as false and unprincipled as they are unfair and disingenuous.

It was impossible that men, who were so much exposed to public observation as the founders of Methodism, could escape the calumnies and accusations of the ignorant and uncharitable. It is an easy matter to persuade men to believe any calumny, how preposterous soever it may be, if it

be only directed against those of whom they are already predisposed to think ill. Of Mr. Wesley it was reported, that he had hanged himself, and had been cut down just in time: that he had been fined for selling gin: that he was not the real John Wesley, for every body knew that Mr. Wesley was dead. Some said he was a Quaker; others an Anabaptist; whilst one, superior in wisdom to the rest of his fellows, declared him to be a Presbyterian-Papist. It was sometimes reported that he was a Jesuit, and in the habit of keeping popish priests in his house:—that he received large remittances from Spain, in order to make a party among the poor—and when the Spaniards should land, he was to join them with twenty thousand men. Some even went so far as to affirm that they had seen him with the Pretender in France: and in 1744, when a proclamation was issued requiring all Papists to leave London, such was the prejudice that prevailed against him on this ground, that he thought it prudent to remain a week longer there than he intended, for the purpose of removing every cause of suspicion.

Nor was Charles Wesley less seriously incommoded than his brother by the imputation of disloyalty. When travelling in Yorkshire, he was accused of having spoken treasonable words, and witnesses were summoned before the magistrates at Wakefield to depose against him. However, by a providential circumstance, he learned this in

time to present himself and confront the witnesses. He had prayed, in the hearing of his accusers, that the Lord would call *home his banished ones;* and by this, it was said, that he meant the Pretender. But when he explained his meaning, and declared he had no thought of praying for the Pretender, the magistrates expressed themselves perfectly satisfied, and dismissed the case.

But Mr. Wesley was soon obliged to encounter a more dangerous system of attack than the idle tales of the silly populace—as these calumnies were quickly followed, in many places, by acts of open outrage; which, though not sanctioned by the government, were connived at and encouraged by many of the local magistrates. In the city of Bristol, where Methodism was first organized, after giving, for some nights, considerable disturbance, the mob assembled in great strength. "Not only the courts and alleys," says Mr. Wesley, "but all the streets upwards and downwards, were filled with people, shouting, cursing, and swearing, and ready to swallow the ground with fierceness and rage." But the exertions of the magistracy were soon effectual in quelling the riot. The ringleaders were taken into custody; and when brought before the mayor, they began to excuse themselves, by reviling Mr. Wesley: but that magistrate properly cut them short, by saying, "What Mr. Wesley is, is nothing to you. I will keep the peace. I will have no rioting in this

city." And such was the effect of this decisive line of conduct on the part of the civil power, that the fury of the rabble was appeased, and the Methodists were never again disturbed by a mob at Bristol.

In London a similar interposition of the magistrates put a stop to the proceedings of the rioters. The chairman of the Middlesex justices, hearing that the mob had evinced a disposition to disturb the Methodists, called upon Mr. Wesley, and informed him that he and the other Middlesex magistrates had orders from the higher powers to do him justice whenever he should apply to them. Of this proffered protection he soon availed himself, when the mob had stoned him and his followers in the street, and attempted to unroof his chapel at the Foundery. At Chelsea the rioters threw wildfire and crackers into the room where he was preaching: and at Long-Lane they broke in the roof with large stones, so that the congregation were in the most imminent danger. After having attempted to address the rabble without any effect, he sent out three or four resolute men to seize one of the ringleaders. They brought him into the house cursing and blaspheming; dispatched him under a strong escort to the nearest justice; and bound him over to the next sessions at Guilford. It is worthy of remark that, in this scene of uproar and confusion, one of the stoutest

champions of the rioters was struck with sudden remorse, and came into the room with a woman who had been as ferocious as himself; and they both fell upon their knees, to acknowledge their guilt, and the long-suffering patience of a merciful God.

In June, 1742, Mr. Wesley visited Epworth, where a small society of Methodists had been collected, and finding the use of the church denied him, he stood upon his father's tomb, and preached to a numerous congregation, who, as well as himself appear to have been deeply impressed with the circumstance of the son's speaking to them, upon eternal things, as from the ashes of his father. On the ninth of that month he relates the following humorous anecdote: "I rode over to a neighbouring town, to wait upon a justice of the peace, a man of candour and understanding; before whom, I was informed, their angry neighbours had carried a whole waggon-load of these new heretics. But when he asked what they had done, there was a deep silence; for that was a point their conductors had forgot. At length one said, 'Why, they pretend to be better than other people; and besides, they pray from morning till night.' Mr. S—— asked, 'But have they done nothing besides?' 'Yes, Sir,' said an old man, 'an't please your worship, they have *convarted* my wife. Till she went among them, she had such a tongue: and

now she is as quiet as a lamb.' 'Carry them back, carry them back,' replied the justice, 'and let them convert all the scolds in the town.'"

During the early part of the following year the labours of Mr. Charles Wesley had been extensively and eminently successful. He proceeded from the west of England to the colliers of Staffordshire, and found that the society at Wednesbury was in a progressive state. He preached on the market-house steps at Walsall, where, he says, "The street was full of fierce Ephesian beasts, (the principal man setting them on,) who roared and shouted and threw stones incessantly. At the conclusion, a stream of ruffians was suffered to beat me down from the steps: I rose, and having given the blessing, was beat down again; and so a third time. When we had returned thanks to the God of our salvation, I then, from the steps, bid them depart in peace, and walked through the thickest of the rioters. They reviled us, but had no commission to touch a hair of our head."

From this place, having passed through Birmingham and Nottingham, he proceeded to Sheffield. In this town the society, he says, was as a "flock among wolves: the minister having so stirred up the people, that they were ready to tear the Methodists in pieces. At six o'clock I went to the society-house, next door to our brother Bennet's. Hell from beneath was moved to oppose us. As soon as I was in the desk, with David

Taylor, the floods began to lift up their voice. An officer in the army contradicted and blasphemed. I took no notice of him, but sang on. The stones flew thick, striking the desk and the people. To save them and the house from being pulled down, I gave out, that I should preach in the street, and look them in the face. The whole army of the aliens followed me. The captain laid hold on me, and began rioting: I gave him for answer, 'A Word in Season; or, Advice to a Soldier.' I then prayed, particularly for his Majesty, King George, and 'preached the gospel with much contention.' The stones often struck me in the face. I prayed for sinners, as servants of their master, the devil; upon which the captain ran at me with great fury, threatening revenge for abusing, as he called it, 'the King, his master.' He forced his way through the brethren, drew his sword, and presented it to my breast. I immediately opened my breast, and fixing my eye on his, and smiling in his face, calmly said, 'I fear God, and honour the King.' His countenance fell in a moment, he fetched a deep sigh, and putting up his sword, quietly left the place. He had said to one of the company, who afterwards informed me, 'You shall see, if I do but hold my sword to his breast, he will faint away.' So, perhaps, I should, had I only his principles to trust to; but if at that time I was not afraid, no thanks to my natural courage. We returned to our brother

Bennet's, and gave ourselves up to prayer. The rioters followed, and exceeded in outrage all I have seen before. Those at Moorfields, Cardiff, and Walsall, were lambs to these. As there is no 'King in Israel,' I mean no magistrate in Sheffield, every man doth as seemeth good in his own eyes."

The rioters next formed the design of pulling down the society-house, which they actually accomplished on the following day, not one stone being left upon another. At five next morning he took his leave of the society, and observes, "Our hearts were knit together, and greatly comforted: we rejoiced in hope of the glorious appearing of the great God, who had now delivered us out of the mouth of the lions. David Taylor had informed me, that the people of Thorpe, through which we should pass, were exceedingly mad against us. So we found them as we approached the place, and were turning down the lane to Barley-Hall. The ambush rose, and assaulted us with stones, eggs, and dirt. My horse flew from side to side, till he found his way through them. They wounded David Taylor in the forehead, and the wound bled much. I turned back, and asked, what was the reason that a clergyman could not pass without such treatment. At first the rioters scattered; but their captain, rallying them, answered with horrible imprecations and stones. My horse took fright, and turned away with me down a steep hill. The enemy pursued me from afar,

and followed shouting. Blessed be God, I received no hurt, only from the eggs and dirt. 'My clothes indeed abhorred me,' and my arm pained me a little from a blow I received at Sheffield."

The same year Mr. John Wesley had a most providential escape from one of the most dangerous of his encounters with the deluded and infuriated populace. A society had been formed amongst the colliers in the neighbourhood of Wednesbury, and great peace reigned amongst them for a short time. This, however, was followed by a scene of a very opposite description, in which the magistrates not only refused their protection to the Methodists, but assisted in stirring up the rabble against them. Mobs were collected by the sound of a horn, windows were demolished, houses broken open, goods destroyed or stolen, men, women, and children, beaten, pelted, or dragged through the kennels, and even pregnant women outraged to the imminent danger of their lives, and the disgrace of humanity. It is said the descendants of some of these persecuted people still remain, and show, one a cupboard, another some other piece of furniture, the only article saved from the wreck, and preserved with religious veneration, as a monument of the sufferings of their ancestors.

After the mob had been permitted to rage without any controul for the space of four or five months, Mr. Wesley arrived in Birmingham, on

his way to Newcastle; and hearing of the state of things at Wednesbury, went there, like a man whose maxim it was always to look danger in the face. He preached at mid-day in Wednesbury without the slightest molestation: but in the afternoon the mob surrounded the house. The occurrences which took place afterwards will be best related in his own words:

"I was writing at Francis Ward's," says he, "in the afternoon, when the cry arose that the mob had beset the house. We prayed that God would disperse them: and so it was; one went this way, and another that, so that in half an hour not a man was left. I told our brethren, 'Now is the time to go;' but they pressed me exceedingly to stay. So, that I might not offend them, I sat down, though I foresaw what would follow. Before five, the mob surrounded the house again, and in greater numbers than ever. The cry of one and all was, 'Bring out the minister! We will have the minister!' I desired one to take the captain by the hand and bring him into the house. After a few sentences interchanged between us, the lion was become a lamb. I desired him to go, and bring one or two of the most angry of his companions. He brought in two, who were ready to swallow the ground with rage; but in two minutes they were as calm as he. I then bade them make way, that I might go out among the people. As soon as I was in the midst of them, I called for a

chair, and asked, 'What do any of you want with me?' Some said, 'We want you to go with us to the justice.' I replied, 'That I will, with all my heart.' I then spoke a few words, which God applied; so that they cried out, with might and main, 'The gentleman is an honest gentleman, and we will spill our blood in his defence.' I asked, 'Shall we go to the justice to-night, or in the morning?' Most of them cried, 'To-night, to-night!' on which I went before, and two or three hundred followed, the rest returning whence they came.

"The night came on before we had walked a mile, together with heavy rain. However, on we went to Bently-Hall, two miles from Wednesbury. One or two ran before, to tell Mr. Lane they had brought Mr. Wesley before his worship. Mr. Lane replied, 'What have I to do with Mr. Wesley? Go, and carry him back again,' By this time the main body came up, and began knocking at the door. A servant told them Mr. Lane was in bed. His son followed, and asked what was the matter. One replied, 'Why, an't please you, they sing psalms all day; nay, and make folks rise at five in the morning: and what would your worship advise us to do?' 'To go home,' said Mr. Lane, 'and be quiet.'

"Here they were at a full stop, till one advised to go to Justice Persehouse, at Walsall. All agreed to this: so we hastened on, and about seven came to his house. But Mr. Persehouse also sent word

that he was in bed. Now they were at a stand again: but at last they all thought it the wisest course to make the best of their way home. About fifty of them undertook to convey me; but we had not gone a hundred yards when the mob of Walsall came pouring in like a flood, and bore down all before them. The Darlaston mob made what defence they could; but they were weary, as well as outnumbered; so that, in a short time, many being knocked down, the rest went away, and left me in their hands.

"To attempt speaking was vain; for the noise on every side was like the roaring of the sea: so they dragged me along till we came to the town, where, seeing the door of a large house open, I attempted to go in; but a man catching me by the hair, pulled me back into the middle of the mob. They made no more stop till they had carried me through the main street, from one end of the town to the other. I continued speaking all the time to those within hearing, feeling no pain nor weariness. At the west end of the town, seeing a door half open, I made towards it, and would have gone in, but a gentleman in the shop would not suffer me, saying they would pull the house to the ground. However, I stood at the door, and asked, 'Are you willing to hear me speak?' Many cried out, 'No, no! knock his brains out! Down with him! Kill him at once!' Others said, 'Nay,

but we will hear him first.' I began asking, 'What evil have I done? Which of you all have I wronged in word or deed?' and continued speaking for above a quarter of an hour, till my voice suddenly failed. Then the floods began to lift up their voice again; many crying out, 'Bring him away! bring him away!'

"In the mean time my strength and my voice returned, and I broke out aloud into prayer. And now the man, who just before headed the mob, turned and said, 'Sir, I will spend my life for you; follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head.' Two or three of his fellows confirmed his words, and got close to me immediately. At the same time, the gentleman in the shop cried out, 'For shame! for shame! let him go!' An honest butcher, who was a little further off, said it was a shame they should do thus; and pulled back four or five, one after another, who were running on the most fiercely. The people then, as if it had been by common consent, fell back to the right and left; while those three or four men took me between them, and carried me through them all: but on the bridge the mob rallied again; we, therefore, went on one side, over the mill-dam, and thence through the meadows: till, a little before ten, God brought me safe to Wednesbury: having lost only one flap of my waistcoat, and a little skin from one of my hands."

This storm which was raised against the Methodists raged more or less for nearly ten years, but during the years 1742 and 1743 it was at its height. The mobs of Walsall, Darlaston, and Wednesbury, hired for the purpose by their superiors, broke open the houses of their neighbours at pleasure by day and by night; extorting money from the few that had it, taking away or destroying their victuals and goods, beating and wounding their persons, insulting the women, and openly declaring they would destroy every Methodist in the country. Thus were a loyal and unoffending people treated in that neighbourhood for eight months, and were then publicly branded in the Whitehall and London Evening Post, for rioters and incendiaries!

Although it was only in this neighbourhood that advantage was taken of the popular cry against the Methodists to break open their doors and plunder their houses, yet still greater barbarities were exercised on their persons in other places. Some of the preachers received serious injury; others were held under water till they were nearly dead; and of the women who attended them, some were so treated by the cowardly and brutal populace, that they never thoroughly recovered. "One evening," says Mr. Thomas Mitchell, "while William Darney was preaching, the curate of Guiseley came at the head of a large mob, who threw eggs in his face, pulled him down, dragged

him out of the house on the ground, and stamped upon him. The curate himself then thought it was enough, and bade them let him alone, and go their way. Some time after, Jonathan Maskew came. As soon as he began to speak, the same mob came, pulled him down, and dragged him out of the house. They then tore off his clothes, and dragged him along upon his naked back over the gravel and pavement. When they thought they had sufficiently bruised him, they let him go, and went away. With much difficulty he crept to a friend's house, where they dressed his wounds, and got him some clothes. It was my turn to go next. No sooner was I at the town, than the mob came, like so many roaring lions. My friends advised me not to preach that night, and undertook to carry me out of the town. But the mob followed me in a great rage, and stoned me for near two miles, so that it was several weeks before I got well of the bruises I then received."

About the year 1743, Mr. Wesley made his first journey into Cornwall, where his brother had preceded him, and preached in various places, sometimes amidst mobs "as desperate as that at Sheffield." The inhabitants of Cornwall had long retained, not only habits, but even a language differing from that of the rest of their countrymen. But, as Mr. Middleton observes, in his Ecclesiastical Memoirs, when Mr. Barrington visited the country, preaching having been discontinued in that dialect for the

space of ninety years, he could find only "one old woman who could scold in it." This corner of the island, rich in those ores and metallic substances which too often prove the mammon of unrighteousness, had been shamefully neglected, and the working classes left in a deplorable state of moral degradation. When Mr. Wesley arrived in it, he found at St. Ives a small religious society, which had been formed upon Dr. Woodward's plan.—"They gladly received him, and formed the nucleus of the Methodist societies in Cornwall, which from this time rapidly increased. In this visit he spent three weeks, preaching in the most populous parts of the mining district, with an effect which still continues to be felt. In no part of England has Methodism obtained more influence than in the west of Cornwall. It has become, in fact, the leading profession of the people, and its moral effects upon society may be looked upon with the highest satisfaction and gratitude. Nor were the Cornish people ungrateful to the instrument of the benefit. When he was last in the county, in old age, the man who had formerly slept on the ground for want of a lodging, and picked blackberries to satisfy his hunger, and who had narrowly escaped with his life from a desperate mob at Falmouth, passed through the towns and villages as in a triumphal march, whilst the windows were crowded with people anxious to get a sight of him, and to pronounce upon him their benedictions."

But a short time after Mr. Wesley's first visit to Cornwall, a hot persecution broke out both of the preachers and people connected with the society. At St. Ives the mob pulled down the chapel, and some magistrates were found base enough to sign press warrants for seizing the Methodist preachers, describing them as "able-bodied men, who had no lawful calling or sufficient maintenance." Under this pretext, Mr. Maxfield was apprehended, and thrown into prison at Penzance. About the same time, John Nelson and Thomas Beard were pressed and ordered to serve in the army. The former had his home and head-quarters at Birstall, and the vicar of the parish, as Dr. Southey observes, "thought it justifiable to rid the parish, by any means, of a man who preached with more zeal and more effect than himself. He," therefore, "readily consented to a proposal from the alehouse-keepers that John should be pressed for a soldier; for, as fast as he made converts, they lost customers." Accordingly, being taken before the commissioners at Halifax, where the vicar was one of the bench, they refused to hear any testimony respecting his character, though numbers attended for that purpose, because they said they had heard enough of him from the minister of the parish. "So, gentlemen," said Nelson, "I see there is neither law nor justice for a man that is called a Methodist;" and addressing himself to the vicar by name, he said, "What do you know of me that is evil? Whom

have I defrauded? or where have I contracted a debt that I cannot pay?" "You have no visible way of getting your living," he replied. But Nelson answered, "I am as able to get my living with my hands as any man of my trade in England is, and *you* know it." But all remonstrances were in vain. He was marched off to Bradford, and, by order of the commissioners, was thrown into a dungeon, where the filth and blood from the shambles ran into the place, and the only accommodation afforded him was some stinking straw, for there was not even a stone to sit upon. After much ill usage, however, he was released by an order from the secretary at war; but his companion, Thomas Beard, who had been pressed for the same reason, sunk under his sufferings. He was then lodged in the hospital at Newcastle, where he still praised God continually. His fever increasing, some blood was taken from him; but his arm festered, mortified, and was cut off. Two or three days after this, God signed his discharge, and called him to his eternal home.

Similar attempts were sometimes made upon Mr. Wesley himself: and Dr. Borlase, a man of letters as well as of character, was not ashamed to take part in those disgraceful proceedings. One day Mr. Ustick, a Cornish gentleman, came up to Mr. Wesley, as he was preaching in the open air, and said, "Sir, I have a warrant from Dr. Borlase, and you must go with me." The Doctor probably

thought that this was striking at the root; and that if the leader himself were disposed of, Cornwall would soon be rid of his followers. But how plausible soever this might have seemed when the resolution was formed, "Mr. Ustick found himself considerably embarrassed when he had taken into his custody one who, instead of being a wild, hair-brained fanatic, had all the manner and appearance of a respectable clergyman, and was perfectly courteous and self-possessed." When he saw something of the real character of his prisoner, he asked him with great civility, if he was willing to go with him to the Doctor; and Mr. Wesley said, immediately, if he pleased. "Sir," said Mr. Ustick, "I must wait upon you to your inn, and in the morning, if you will be so good as to go with me, I will show you the way." They rode there accordingly in the morning; but, whatever communication was made to the Doctor on the previous night, he was not at home; Mr. Ustick, therefore, saying that he had executed his commission, took his leave, and left Mr. Wesley at liberty.

These details, which make but a very small portion of the indignities and persecutions suffered by the philanthropic founders of Methodism, while they reflect an indelible disgrace upon the brutalized and ignorant populace, depict the character of the primitive Methodists in a very heroic as well as Christian colouring. The service in which they were engaged was one of great peril and

personal risk; and Mr. Wesley has dwelt upon this with great force, in one of his Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion. "Who is there among you, brethren," he says, "that is willing (examine your own hearts) even to save souls from death at this price? Would not you let a thousand souls perish, rather than you would be the instrument of rescuing them thus? I do not speak now with regard to conscience, but to the inconveniences that must accompany it. Can you sustain them if you would? Can you bear the summer sun to beat upon your naked head? Can you suffer the wintry rain or wind from whatever quarter it blows? Are you able to stand in the open air, without any covering or defence, when God casteth abroad his snow like wool, or scattereth his hoar frost like ashes? And yet these are some of the smallest inconveniences which accompany field-preaching. For, beyond all these, are the contradiction of sinners, the scoffs both of the great vulgar and the small; contempt and reproach of every kind—often more than verbal affronts—stupid, brutal violence, sometimes to the hazard of health, or limbs, or life. Brethren, do you envy us this honour? What, I pray you, would buy you to be a field-preacher? Or what, think you, could induce any man of common sense to continue therein one year, unless he had a full conviction in himself, that it was the will of God concerning him? Upon this conviction it is (were we to submit

to these things on any other motive whatever, it would furnish you with a better proof of our distraction than any that has yet been found) that we now do for the good of souls what you cannot, will not, dare not do. And we desire not that you should: but this one thing we may reasonably desire of you—do not increase the difficulties, which are already so great, that, without the mighty power of God, we must sink under them. Do not assist in trampling down a little handful of men, who, for the present, stand in the gap between ten thousand poor wretches and destruction, till you find some others to take their places."

The persecution, however, which the first Methodists suffered was by no means inoperative in advancing the spread and propagation of their system. Except in a few instances, in which the conventicle act was enforced against them, the persecution which they suffered was not in general of a legal nature: and the patience they evinced amidst the violence of mobs and the brutality of the lowest and worst of the people, had a tendency to recommend the truths which they preached to the attention of every man of reason or religion. The sympathy also which was excited by their sufferings added to the number of their friends; and was ultimately productive of consequences highly conducive to the prosperity of Methodism.

CHAPTER VI.

CONTROVERSY WITH THE METHODISTS.

Had the opposition given to Mr. Wesley and his followers been confined to lawless mobs and ruffianly outrage, it would soon have been forgotten: for the wholesome prosecution of a few rioters, in different places, at length put an end to enormities that would never have been committed, if the local magistrates had attempted to prevent them. It is most probable that many believed the popular outcry made against the Methodists; and really thinking they were Papists, or disaffected to the reigning sovereign, their zeal against them was the more intensely kindled. But Methodism was forced to encounter another description of adversaries, that, whilst they were themselves completely foiled in the contest, contributed their quota in exciting considerable prejudice against it.

When the separation took place between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield, these two excellent men evinced to the world, that mutual love and good-will are perfectly compatible with the widest

difference of opinion upon a variety of subjects. By men who are themselves destitute of genuine piety, and are consequently unacquainted with that generous magnanimity with which it is always accompanied, it is sometimes imagined that those who contend about disputed points in divinity, mutually hate each other; and it is to be lamented, that the severity and irrelevant personalities with which religious controversy has been frequently conducted, have afforded the enemies of religion but too many plausible arguments for such an opinion. However, this was not the case in the present instance, at least as far as the two principals themselves were concerned. The reluctance with which Mr. Whitefield opposed the opinions of his former friends and allies is evident in all his affectionate and feeling remonstrances: and that Mr. Wesley was no less anxious to avoid a separation, will appear from the concessions which he made to Mr. Whitefield for that purpose.

The strong affection which existed between the Messrs. Wesley, Whitefield, and Howel Harris, even after they had differed so widely in opinion, induced them to enter into "an agreement" to forget all their respective peculiarities as much as possible in their sermons, to use as far as they could, with a good conscience, the same phrases in expressing the points upon which they substantially agreed, and to avoid all controversy. And, although Charles Wesley wrote upon the back

of this concordat "vain agreement," Mr. John Wesley's sermon on "The Lord our Righteousness," is an instance of his anxiety to approach as far as possible, in his mode of expressing himself, towards the views and prepossessions of his opposing brethren. Indeed he went too far sometimes, for the sake of peace, in verging towards the Calvinistic system, and in doing so, he frequently left himself liable to be misunderstood by both parties. However, the incautious statements which were sometimes made of the doctrines of grace, had begun to produce a spirit of Antinomianism in different parts of the connexion: and, to correct this perilous tendency, it was found necessary to review the case in conference, in order to apply some remedy to the growing evil. The Minutes of 1770 contained, therefore, the following passages:—

"We said in 1744, 'We have leaned too much towards Calvinism.' Wherein?

"1. With regard to man's faithfulness. Our Lord himself taught us to use the expression. And we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert, on his authority, that if a man is not 'faithful in the unrighteous mammon,' God will not give 'him the true riches.'

"2. With regard to 'working for life.' This also our Lord has expressly commanded us.—'Labour,' εργαζεσθε, literally, 'work for the meat that endureth to everlasting life. And, in fact, every believer, till he comes to glory, works *for* as well as *from* life.

"3. We have received it as a maxim, that 'a man is to do nothing in order to justification.' Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God should 'cease from evil, and learn to do well.' Whoever repents should do 'works meet for repentance.' And if this is not in order to find favour, what does he do them for?

"Review the whole affair.

"1. Who of us is *now* accepted of God?

"He that believes in Christ with a loving and obedient heart.

"2. But who among those that never heard of Christ?

"He that feareth God and worketh righteousness, according to the light he has.

"3. Is this the same with 'he that is sincere?'

"Nearly, if not quite.

"4. Is not this 'salvation by works?'

"Not by the *merit* of works, but by works as a *condition*.

"5. What have we then been disputing about for these thirty years?

"I am afraid about words.

"6. The grand objection to one of the preceding propositions is drawn from matter of fact. God does, in fact, justify those who, by their own confession, neither feared God nor wrought righteousness. Is this an exception to the general rule?

"It is a doubt, whether God makes any exception at all. But how are we sure that the person in question never did fear God and work righteous-

ness? His own saying so is not proof: for we know how all that are convinced of sin undervalue themselves in every respect.

"7. Does not talking of a justified or a sanctified state tend to mislead men? almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every hour and every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, 'according to our works'—according to the whole of our inward tempers, and our outward behaviour."

Notwithstanding, when these passages are candidly and fairly examined, they are found to contain nothing but what had been stated in substance in the first conferences that had been held, they gave a shock to the sensitive orthodoxy of some high-flying Calvinists; and it was supposed that the Methodists had reached the very acme of heresy in adopting the mode of expression contained in the Minutes. The greatest stone of stumbling, however, was the remarks that were made on the subject of *merit*:—

"As to merit itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid, we are rewarded 'according to our works; yea, because of our works.' How does this differ from, 'for the sake of our works?' And how differs this from *secundum merita operum*, 'as our works deserve?' Can you split this hair? I doubt I cannot."

The outcry of "heresy" having been raised against these Minutes, the alarm was taken at Trevecca;

and the Countess of Huntingdon was so panic-struck by the appearance of such erroneous dogmas, that she declared every one who did not fully disavow the sentiments contained in them, must quit the college immediately. The masters and students were all required to deliver their sentiments in writing, without reserve; but Mr. Fletcher, who was at that time the superintendent, while he acknowledged that the wording of the Minutes was unguarded and not sufficiently explicit, explained, vindicated, and approved the doctrine contained in them; and resigned his office, with an earnest wish that the Countess might find one to preside there less insufficient than himself, and more willing to go certain lengths in party spirit.

This excellent man, who thus withdrew from the superintendence of the college at Trevecca, was a gentleman, as Dr. Southey observes, "of rare talents and rarer virtue. No age," continues he, "or country has ever produced a man of more fervent piety, or more perfect charity; no church has ever produced a more apostolic minister."— He was born in Switzerland, at Nyon, in the Pays de Vaud, in the year 1729. He was of a respectable Bernese family, allied to the House of Sardinia, and whose name was La Flechere. Having been educated for the ministry at the university of Geneva, he found himself unequal to the arduous duties of the pastoral office, as well as unable to subscribe to the doctrine of predestination which

was so rigorously expressed in the Genevan articles, and therefore resolved to seek preferment in the military profession, to which his father belonged. Accordingly he repaired to Lisbon, and upon entering the Portuguese service, was ordered out to the Brazils. A providential circumstance, however occurred, which prevented him from putting his design into execution. A servant having overturned a kettle of boiling water on his leg, he was confined to bed at the time of embarkation, and the vessel having set sail without him, she was lost on her passage with all her crew.

Mr. Fletcher's military ardour not being abated by this disappointment, he left Portugal with the prospect of active service in the Netherlands: but his hopes being again frustrated by the conclusion of peace and the death of his uncle, who was then a colonel in the Dutch service, he came over to England, improved himself in the language, and became tutor in the family of Mr. Hill, of Fern-Hall, in Shropshire. When this gentleman, who was member for Shrewsbury, went to London to attend parliament, he generally took his family and tutor with him: and on one of these journies, while they stopped at St. Alban's, Mr. Fletcher casually met with a poor woman, who, as he said, talked so delightfully to him of Jesus Christ, that he knew not how the time passed away. By this means he first became acquainted with the Methodists; and, by the advice of his friends, and of Mr.

Wesley, whom he consulted, he came to the resolution of taking orders in the Church of England. The ordination took place in the Chapel Royal, St. James's, in the month of March, 1757: and, as soon as it was over, he went to the Methodist Chapel in West-street, where he assisted Mr. Wesley in administering the Lord's Supper. Nearly three years after this, through the influence of Mr. Hill, he was presented with the vicarage of Madeley. The circumstances attending his presentation to this living, as related by one of his biographers, will serve to give the reader an idea of his real character. "One day Mr. Hill informed him that the living of Dunham, in Cheshire, then vacant, was at his service. 'The parish,' he continued, 'is small, the duty light, the income good (£400, per annum,) and it is situated in a fine healthy, sporting country.' After thanking Mr. Hill most cordially for his kindness, Mr. Fletcher added, 'Alas! sir, Dunham will not suit me; there is too much money, and too little labour.' 'Few clergymen make such objections,' said Mr. Hill, 'it is a pity to decline such a living, as I do not know that I can find you another. What shall we do? Would you like Madeley?' 'That, sir, would be the very place for me.' 'My object, Mr. Fletcher, is to make you comfortable in your own way. If you prefer Madeley, I shall find no difficulty in persuading Chambray, the present vicar, to exchange it for Dunham, which is worth more than twice as

much.' In this way he became vicar of Madeley, with which he was so perfectly satisfied, that he never afterwards sought any other honour or preferment."

In the parish of Madeley, which was a very populous one, there were extensive collieries and iron works; and consequently the character of his parishioners was such as is generally found amongst the class of persons engaged in such establishments. Mr. Fletcher's zeal had therefore, in this place, abundant scope for the exercise of all its energies. The whole rents of his small patrimonial estate in Switzerland were set apart for charitable uses; and he drew so liberally from every other source that was within his power for the same benevolent purpose, that even his furniture and wardrobe were not excepted. Mrs. Fletcher relates of him, that a man, who was brought into very distressing circumstances, once applied to him for relief, when, it seems, his finances were so exhausted, that he could not help him by any adequate pecuniary donation. At length, recollecting the pewter service which was placed on his kitchen-shelves, like one who had discovered something of the greatest advantage, he hastened to collect it together, and brought it to the poor man, saying, in his usual pointed manner, "This will be of service to *you*, and *I* can do without it; a wooden trencher will serve me quite as well."

In the discharge of his ministerial duties, Mr.

Fletcher's zeal was altogether unrivalled; and in such a parish as Madeley, where vice and profligacy abounded so extensively; it was not to be expected that the pious exertions of this indefatigable minister should proceed without any opposition. However, by the uniformity of his benevolence and the kindness of his manners, he soon overcame the prejudices which interest or depravity had excited against him; and at length he had the satisfaction of seeing his church attended by an overflowing congregation, which at first was neglected to a shameful degree.

Such was the man whom bigotry obliged to relinquish a charge that he had undertaken gratuitously, at the solicitation of the Countess of Huntingdon herself. The establishment at Trevecca had hitherto made very specious professions of liberality: and, to speak the truth, the wide difference of opinion between the chief directors of it, showed that they had acted upon the principles which they professed. The Countess herself, the founder, was a supralapsarian: the Hon. and Rev. Walter Shirley, the president, was a sublapsarian: while Mr. Fletcher, the superintendent, maintained the doctrine of general redemption. But, as soon as Mr. Wesley's Minutes appeared, this liberality could be practised no longer. The Countess would insist upon every one in the college to renounce them in form, and this Mr. Fletcher could not possibly do consistently with his con-

science. He therefore relinquished his office, without any hesitation; but had at this time no apprehension whatever of taking any farther part in the dispute. His explanation, however, and defence of the doctrine contained in the Minutes were worthy the pen of this excellent and talented divine. "If Mr. Wesley," says he, "meant, that we are saved *by the merit of works*, and not entirely by that of Christ, you might exclaim against his proposition as erroneous: and I would echo back your exclamation. But, as he flatly denies it in these words, 'Not by the merit of works,' and has constantly asserted the contrary for above thirty years, we cannot, without monstrous injustice, fix that sense upon the word merit in this paragraph. Divesting himself of bigotry and party spirit, he generously acknowledges truth even when it is held forth by his adversaries,—an instance of candour worthy our imitation! He sees that God offers and gives his children, here on earth, particular rewards for particular instances of obedience. He knows that when a man is saved meritoriously by Christ, and *conditionally by*, (or, if you please, *upon the terms of*) *the work of faith, the patience of hope, and the labour of love*, he shall particularly be rewarded in heaven for his works: and he observes that the Scriptures steadily maintain we are recompensed *according to our works*, yea, *because of our works*."

The offence and alarm, however, that the

Countess of Huntingdon had taken, were not to be removed by the explanation which Mr. Fletcher felt himself warranted to give; and, in a short time after, the Rev. Walter Shirley, who was one of her Ladyship's chaplains, sent forth a circular letter to all the serious clergy, and several others, inviting them to go in a body to the ensuing conference, and "insist upon a formal recantation of the said Minutes, and, in case of a refusal, to sign and publish their protest against them."

Mr. Shirley, and a few others, accordingly attended the Bristol Conference, where the proceedings were not so furious as might have been expected from such a warlike manifesto as had been published upon the occasion. When the circular had first appeared, it was very naturally resented by Mr. Wesley, partly because it was published before any explanation had been asked from him respecting the obnoxious Minutes, and partly because it assumed that Mr. Shirley and his friends had a right to enter the conference, and to demand a recantation. It was therefore soon found by the author of this circular that he must come forward in a different manner, or that Mr. Wesley and the conference would have no intercourse with him. This induced Lady Huntingdon and her chaplain to address explanatory letters to Mr. Wesley; and he, being satisfied with the explanation, invited Mr. Shirley and his friends to the conference on the third day of its sitting. The

meeting was managed with perfect good temper on both sides, and with a spirit of mutual conciliation. Mr. Wesley acknowledged that the Minutes were "not sufficiently guarded:" and both he and the conference declared, that in framing them no such meaning was intended as was imputed to them. "We abhor," said they, "the doctrine of justification by works, as a most perilous and abominable doctrine; and, as the said Minutes are not sufficiently guarded in the way they are expressed, we hereby solemnly declare, in the sight of God, that we have no trust or confidence but in the alone merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, for justification or salvation, either in life, death, or the day of judgment; and though no one is a real Christian believer (and consequently cannot be saved) who doth not good works, where there is time and opportunity, yet our works have no part in meriting or purchasing our justification, either in whole or in part."

This declaration was signed by Mr. Wesley and fifty-three of the preachers; and, upon the part of Mr. Shirley it was acknowledged that he had mistaken the meaning of the Minutes. "The Declaration," said he, "agreed to in Conference the 8th day of August, 1771, has convinced Mr. Shirley he had mistaken the meaning of the doctrinal points in the Minutes of the Conference held in London, August 7, 1770; and he hereby wishes to testify the full satisfaction he has in the

said Declaration, and his hearty concurrence and agreement with the same."

The temper displayed, however, by both parties at this interview was only like those calms that are prelusive of approaching storms. A controversy on the five points soon broke out, which was conducted by several persons who entered into it, with as much warmth, asperity, and personal abuse, as perhaps ever accompanied any polemic discussion in England. On the Calvinistic side, the most conspicuous writers were Mr. Richard (afterwards Sir Richard) Hill, his brother the Rev. Rowland Hill, and the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, vicar of Broad Hembury, in Devonshire. "Never were any writings," says Dr. Southey, "more thoroughly saturated with the essential acid of Calvinism, than those of the predestinarian champions. It would scarcely be credible, that three persons, of good birth and education, and of unquestionable goodness and piety, should have carried on controversy in so vile a manner, and with so detestable a spirit." Mr. Thomas Olivers, and the Rev. Walter Sellon were the severest writers on the part of general redemption; but, although some of their expressions were both harsh and personal, they might be considered courteous controversialists when compared with their furious and scurrilous opponents.

The Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, the principal champion of the Calvinistic tenets, was

bred at Westminster, and, according to his own account, converted, at the age of sixteen, by the sermon of a lay-preacher, in a barn in Ireland. He was a man of a warm temper, shallow judgment, and considerable talent in declamatory composition. He had published a treatise upon absolute predestination, a little before this controversy broke out, which was chiefly translated from the Latin of Zanchius. Mr. Wesley set forth an analysis of this treatise, for the purpose of exposing its monstrous doctrine, and concluded in these words: "The sum of all is this:—one in twenty (suppose) of mankind is elected; nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will; the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can. Reader, believe this, or be damned. Witness my hand, A—— T——." Toplady immediately took fire at this exposure of his doctrine, and accused Mr. Wesley of intending to convey the idea to the world that this paragraph was really his. "In almost any case," said he, "a similar forgery would transmit the criminal to Virginia or Maryland, if not to Tyburn. The satanic guilt of the person who could excogitate and publish to the world a position like that, baffles all power of description, and is only to be exceeded (if exceedable) by the satanic shamelessness which dares to lay the black position at the door of other men."

Nothing is more obvious than that Mr. Wesley's intention in this passage was to give the sum of

Mr. Toplady's doctrine for the purpose of exposing its monstrosity, and not to impose it upon the public for his writing. Even Mr. Toplady himself could scarcely have supposed otherwise: but the caricature bore too strong a likeness of the original to allow him to look upon it with any degree of equanimity. After vindicating himself, by stating what he intended, Mr. Wesley left Olivers to carry on the contest with his incensed antagonist. This increased Toplady's resentment, as Olivers had been originally a mechanic; and he poured forth a torrent of abuse against the man who had now entered the lists against him, as if the merits of the debate depended upon the station of the antagonists. "Let Mr. Wesley," said he, "fight his own battles. I am as ready as ever to meet him with the sling of reason and the stone of God's word in my hand. But, let him not fight by proxy; let his coblers keep to their stalls; let his tinkers mend their brazen vessels; let his barbers confine themselves to their blocks and basons; let his blacksmiths blow more suitable coals than those of nice controversy: every man in his own order." But when he spoke of Mr. Wesley himself, or of his doctrine, all the acid in his nature, which seems to have been a very large proportion, appeared to flow into his pen. The very titles of his pieces, such as, "An old Fox tarred and feathered,"—"More work for Mr. John Wesley," "The Serpent and the Fox," "Pope John," &c. were indicative of the spirit in which they were conceived.

Mr. Toplady's allusions to Mr. Wesley, in those pieces which he published during the debate, were so much at variance with the character that is given to that celebrated man both by friend and foe, that it is next to impossible he could have believed what he wrote himself upon that subject. Blunders and blasphemies, he said, were too species of commodities in which Mr. Wesley had driven a larger traffic, than any other blunder-merchant this country had produced. Considered as a reasoner, he called him one of the most contemptible writers that ever set pen to paper: and, "abstracted from all warmth," says he, "and from all prejudices, I believe him to be the most rancorous hater of the gospel system that ever appeared in this island." He insisted that Socinus and Arminius were the two necessary supporters of a free-willer's coat of arms; "for," said he, "Arminianism is the head, and Socinianism the tail of one and the self-same serpent; and when the head works itself in, it will soon draw the tail after it." He calls a tract of Mr. Wesley's against the doctrine of predestination, "the famous Moorfields powder, whose chief ingredients are an equal portion of gross Heathenism, Pelagianism, Mahometanism, Popery, Manichæism, Ranterism, and Antinomianism, culled, dried, and pulverized, and mingled with as much palpable Atheism as you can scrape together."

During this protracted controversy Mr. Wesley himself wrote but little, and what he did publish

was chiefly in defence of his own consistency. The conclusion of his first reply to Mr. Richard Hill will give the reader some idea of the pointed manner in which he could address an opponent. "Having now answered," says he, "the queries you proposed, suffer me, Sir, to propose one to you; the same which a gentleman of your own opinion proposed to me some years since:—'Sir, how is it that as soon as a man comes to the knowledge of THE TRUTH, it spoils his temper?' That it does so I had observed over and over, as well as Mr. J. had. But how can we account for it? Has the truth (so Mr. J. termed what many love to term the doctrine of free-grace) a natural tendency to spoil the temper? to inspire pride, haughtiness, superciliousness? to make a man 'wiser in his own eyes than seven men that can render a reason?' Does it naturally turn a man into a cynic, a bear, a Toplady? Does it at once set him free from all the restraints of good-nature, decency, and good-manners? Cannot a man hold distinguishing grace, as it is called, but he must distinguish himself for passion, sourness, bitterness? Must a man, as soon as he looks upon himself to be an absolute favourite of heaven, look upon all that oppose him as Diabolians, as predestinated dogs of hell? Truly, the melancholy instance now before us would almost induce us to think so. For who was of a more amiable temper than Mr. Hill, a few years ago? When I first

conversed with him in London, I thought I had seldom seen a man of fortune who appeared to be of a more humble, modest, gentle, friendly disposition. And yet this same Mr. H., when he has once been grounded in the knowledge of THE TRUTH, is of a temper as totally different from this, as light is from darkness! He is now haughty, supercilious, disdaining his opponents, as unworthy to be set with the dogs of his flock! He is violent, impetuous, bitter of spirit! in a word, the author of the Review!—O, Sir, what a commendation is this of your doctrine! Look at Mr. Hill the Arminian! the loving, amiable, generous, friendly man. Look at Mr. Hill the Calvinist! Is it the same person? this spiteful, morose, touchy man? Alas, what has the knowledge of THE TRUTH done? What a deplorable change has it made? Sir, I love you still; though I cannot esteem you, as I did once. Let me entreat you, if not for the honour of God, yet for the honour of your cause, avoid, for the time to come, all anger, all spite, all sourness and bitterness, all contemptuous usage of your opponents, not inferior to you, unless in fortune. O, put on again bowels of mercies, kindness, gentleness, long-suffering; endeavouring to hold, even with them that differ from you in opinion, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!"

It is refreshing to remark, amidst the torrents of abuse and uncharitable severity called forth by

this controversy, the heavenly temper and evangelical correctness exhibited in the writings of the venerable Vicar of Madeley. Mr. Toplady said of Mr. Fletcher's works, that, in the very few pages which he had perused, the serious passages were dullness double-condensed, and the lighter passages impudence double-distilled: but in this, while we can perceive the wretched spirit of a miserable partizan, the writer gave a proof of his want of taste, as well as of judgment or sound discrimination. A gentleman, however, who possesses both, says of the works of this valuable minister of Christ, that, "if ever true charity was manifested in polemical writings, it was by Fletcher of Madeley. Even theological controversy never, in the slightest degree, irritated his heavenly temper. On sending the manuscript of his first Check to Antinomianism to a friend much younger than himself, he says, 'I beg, as upon my bended knees, you will revise and correct it, and take off *quod durius sonat* in point of *works*, *reproof*, and *style*. I have followed my light, which is but that of smoaking flax; put yours to mine. I am charged hereabouts with scattering fire-brands, arrows, and death. Quench some of my brands; blunt some of my arrows; and take off all my deaths, except that which I design for Antinomianism.'"

Mr. Fletcher's natural disposition was averse to polemical divinity: but a deep sense of the evils of the system he encountered, induced him, with

much reluctance, to engage in the painful task. Possessed of all that was amiable in disposition, and filled with love for all good men, by what names or opinions soever they might be distinguished, nothing, but the imperative call of duty, could have prevailed upon him to adventure himself in the troubled and dusky atmosphere of religious controversy: and when he was engaged in it, as might be expected from his character, he was far from employing, in the cause he espoused, the degrading auxiliaries of invective and personal abuse. His works exhibit a model of profound reasoning and critical acumen; while, at the same time, he evinces that respect for his opponents which he considered was due to the talents and piety they were supposed to possess. He went even so far as to hope, that some of those who wrote and preached against his views of Christian Perfection, were so happily inconsistent as to enjoy that great blessing for which he contended. And, notwithstanding he strove in vain for an outward reconciliation of the contending parties, he has done much towards moderating the rigours of the ultra-Calvinists on the one hand, and evangelizing the views of the Pelagianized Arminians on the other. Since his time the doctrine of predestination has never dared to assume so high a tone as it did in the school of Toplady and Berridge; and although frequently we may find individuals who will be ready to run all the length with them on

this subject, the sober, pious, and reflecting Calvinists are now but little removed from the same description of persons amongst those who profess to be of an opposite persuasion. Mr. Fletcher's love for his opponents was manifested by the most unequivocal proofs; and his holy life, faithful labours, and triumphant death, were a transcript of the sacred truths which he so ably vindicated from the pulpit and the press.

It is a remarkable fact in the history of this controversy, that both parties claimed the Church of England as favourable to their views. It must, indeed, be confessed that the doctrine of general redemption was not only held by the English reformers, but runs through all the formularies of the church, and is supposed in every ministration that is performed for her members from the cradle to the tomb. However, she has acted wisely in not giving any direct, authoritative decision upon the celebrated five points, so that pious men of either persuasion may subscribe to her articles, and remain in her communion. The Confession of Faith adopted by the Church of England may, therefore, be considered as one of comprehension, in which the tone of her own legitimate and natural dogmas was lowered, so as to prevent those that were Calvinistically inclined from separating themselves, or leaving her communion. The observations of the late Archbishop Magee upon this subject are worthy of the serious attention of those who,

by a zeal without knowledge, would endeavour to enlist the church in the cause of their own peculiar opinions. "If," says that prelate, "any proof were wanting, that our Articles are, as they profess to be, of a comprehensive character, it would be found in this, that, of the contending parties into which our church is unhappily divided, each claims them as its own. By those who hold the creed of Arminius, they are pronounced to be Arminian: and by those who hold the creed of Calvin, they are pronounced to be Calvinistic. The natural inference of the impartial reasoner would be that they are *neither;* whilst they contain within them what may be traced to some of the leading principles of *both*. And this is the truth. They are not enslaved to the dogmas of any party in religion. They are not Arminian. They are not Calvinistic. They are *Scriptural.* They are *Christian.* As the different parties profess to derive their leading tenets from Scripture, so do they profess to find them in the Articles. But these are answerable for the extravagances of no sect; and are as far removed from the unjustifiable assumption, that man is sufficient for his own salvation, as they are from that monstrous metaphysics that would render him in all respects a necessary agent, and altogether passive and inoperative in that great work."

If this view of the Articles, which has been taken by an excellent judge, be correct, we know no

man who has steered clearer of these two extremes, or in a more eminent degree kept the middle course, than Mr. Fletcher: "the natural inference," therefore, "of the impartial reasoner would be," that he held the doctrines of the church according to the legitimate meaning and intention of the Articles.

Indeed the evangelical sentiments of this excellent writer, are those that pervade the articles, liturgy, and homilies of the church in which he was so faithful and laborious a labourer, and to which he was an ornament of such inestimable worth. It is a happy circumstance that his spirit is much more prevalent amongst both parties than it was when he first engaged in this protracted controversy. "Calvinists and Arminians," as one observes, "now love as brethren, study to promote each other's happiness, agree to lay controversy in general aside, and to dwell most on the grand truths of the gospel on which they are all agreed. By acting so rational and Christian a part, they deprive the infidel of his favourite argument, if such it may be called, that all the different denominations of Christians anathematize each other."

CHAPTER VII.

METHODISM IN IRELAND.

THE early reputation of Ireland for learning, piety, and literary establishments, is not only recorded by her native writers, but has been conceded by foreigners in almost every nation of Europe. The densest clouds, however, of impenetrable darkness soon began to lour in her moral horizon, as soon as the contaminating breath of Popery had reached her unhappy shores. Commissioned by the pope, Henry the Second of England arrived in this country in the twelfth century; and, by fraud and violence, succeeded in subjugating the Irish Church to the papal chair, and in crushing that independence which she had hitherto maintained of the hierarchy and establishment of the Roman Pontiff. From that period, for some centuries, melancholy is the history of her wrongs, and still more melancholy the state of moral darkness and ignorance in which her children were involved. Her annals, under the popish kings of England, present nothing but a continued series of oppression and

misgovernment; and, by the retributive justice of Divine Providence, she is to the present day a thorn in the sides of that power that first chained her to the foot of the papal throne.

The Reformation, which, in every other country in Europe, has richly repaid the inhabitants for all the civil and ecclesiastical broils attendant upon it, by the permanent blessings which it introduced amongst them, was in Ireland productive of comparatively few advantages. Circumstanced as her degenerate inhabitants were, they were incapable of deriving those benefits from it which are its natural offspring, while, at the same time, they were exposed to all the melancholy consequences accidentally resulting from that great revolution. The property of the church was so scandalously plundered, that the best living in Connaught was not worth more than forty shillings a year; and some were so low as sixteen! The consequence was that few parishes could afford a bare subsistence to a Protestant clergyman, and, therefore, few ministers were to be found. The zeal of the Romish clergy in the meantime was putting forth all its energies, and they were continually receiving a supply of auxiliaries from those seminaries which had been established for that purpose in the Spanish dominions. But even had the priests been less active in their duty, and the Protestants more alive to the importance of theirs, the great body of the native Irish were effectually secured by

their language and their ignorance from receiving that instruction which was "able to make them wise unto salvation."

After the restoration, the king, by a judicious and meritorious policy, restored to the Irish Church all the impropriations and portions of tithes which had been vested in the crown; and, by this means, removed in some degree one cause of its inefficiency: but the circumstances attending the short reign of his brother, together with the subsequent revolution which took place, plunged this country into all the miseries of a civil war, and prevented those advantages which would otherwise have accrued, from having their natural operation on the great mass of the inhabitants. The enactment of the penal code, and that system of half persecution which was subsequently pursued, were not only contemptible for their inefficacy, but they militated strongly against the interests of the Protestant Church and the reformed religion. They excited religious prejudice and national animosity; enlisted, by sympathy, every generous feeling in an alliance with superstition and priestcraft; and by their means the very men who were the principal objects of their severity established over the minds of the native Irish, a more absolute dominion than was ever possessed by the clergy of any other country on the face of the globe.

It would answer no good end to conceal the fact, that, from the Reformation down to the beginning

of the present century, the Church of Ireland was employed, by British statesmen, rather as a political engine than as an instrument of instruction in evangelical truth. It was considered as a necessary link to hold the two countries together; and its dignities and benefices were therefore bestowed as the reward of political desert, rather than of moral and religious worth. It is true, that from the accession of the late Earl of Liverpool to his Majesty's councils this system ceased, in a considerable degree, to have any existence; but, whilst it was in operation, it could not fail to produce the most pernicious effects upon the state of religion. Previous to the introduction of Methodism into Ireland, evangelical truth was but little known among the people; and the consequence was, that vice and immorality prevailed to an alarming extent. The great majority of the inhabitants of this country lay, as they do at the present time, in popish darkness; their priests, in general, were much addicted to drunkenness, and retained all the intolerant principles that have so long disgraced the church to which they belong: whilst the conduct of their Protestant and Presbyterian fellow-countrymen was but badly calculated to give them a favourable opinion of a system of religion, which would have been sufficiently odious to them under any circumstance.

The evils which pressed upon the interests of religion in Ireland, did not escape the penetrating

mind of Bishop Berkeley; and he seems to have also discovered the only remedy which could be applied for their removal. In his "Querist," an excellent little book which he published about twelve years before Mr. Wesley landed in Dublin, he proposes the following queries, which show the views that were then entertained by that prelate and philosopher, of what was necessary for his unhappy country:—"Whether there be an instance of a people's being converted, in a Christian sense, otherwise than by preaching to them, and instructing them in their own language? Whether catechists, in the Irish tongue, may not easily be procured and subsisted? and whether this would not be the most practicable means for converting the natives? Whether it be not of great advantage to the Church of Rome, that she hath clergy suited to all ranks of men, in gradual subordination from cardinals down to mendicants? Whether her numerous poor clergy are not very useful in missions, and of much influence with the people? Whether, in defect of able missionaries, persons conversant in low life, and speaking the Irish tongue, if well instructed in the first principles of religion, and in the popish controversy, though, for the rest, on a level with the parish-clerks, or the school-masters of charity schools, may not be fit to mix with, and bring over our poor illiterate natives to the Established Church? Whether it is not to be wished that some parts of our liturgy

and homilies were publicly read in the Irish language? and whether, in these views, it may not be right to breed up some of the better sort of children in the charity-schools, and qualify them for missionaries, catechists, and readers?"

It is obvious that what this sagacious writer wished to effect, Methodism, with all its appendages, was well calculated to accomplish. It might therefore have been made a powerful auxiliary to the Established Church, had the clergy been willing to avail themselves of its assistance, and the Methodist preachers content to occupy that humble station. Indeed, before Bishop Berkeley ever published this little book, an attempt had been made by some benevolent individuals to give instruction to the native Irish in their own language; but it was unsuccessful, owing to the interference of the Irish government. The Rev. Nicholas Brown, in the diocese of Clougher, and the Rev. Walter Atkins, in the diocese of Cloyne, made an attempt about the beginning of the eighteenth century, to instruct their parishioners of the Romish persuasion, in the native language of Ireland. It is said, that the former was always careful to attend a congregation of his popish parishioners, just as his own service was concluded, and to read to them the prayers of the Established Church, which had been translated into their own tongue. It was astonishing the interest that these poor Romanists evinced in hearing the service of

our church in the Irish language: and when their priests endeavoured to dissuade them from attending upon the Protestant worship, by telling them that those prayers had been stolen from the Church of Rome, a grave old man replied shrewdly, "If it was so, they have certainly stolen the best, as thieves generally do."

Mr. Atkins had been no less successful in his part of the country, in obtaining an audience from persons of the same class and persuasion; and the example of these two pious clergymen was followed by several others of the establishment. But the convocation and the parliament, being both consulted upon the subject, political considerations prevailed with the latter; and, though they could not disapprove of the means employed for giving instruction to the Romanists, they deemed it necessary to enforce the acquisition of the English tongue, in order to preserve the connexion which existed between Great Britain and Ireland. The good of immortal souls was therefore sacrificed to this miserable and short-sighted policy.

To be as useful as possible to his fellow-men, especially with regard to the salvation of their souls, appears to have been the primary object which Mr. Wesley kept continually in view from the commencement of his ministry. Accordingly whenever he or his assistants had formed a society in any place, they immediately endeavoured to occupy new ground, and commenced preaching in

the open air, if no other accommodation appeared at their service. At length Mr. Williams, one of the lay-preachers, a man of much zeal and energy, crossed the channel and began to preach in Dublin. As multitudes flocked to hear him, he procured a house in Marlborough-street, which had been intended for a Lutheran Church, and formed a small society there, after encountering much opposition and disturbance, chiefly from the lower class of Roman Catholics.

When Mr. Wesley was informed of his success, he determined to visit this country himself; and accordingly on Tuesday the 4th of August, 1747, he set out from Bristol, and passing through Wales, arrived in Dublin on the following Sunday morning about ten o'clock. Soon after he landed, hearing the bells ringing for church, he went thither immediately; and about three, he says, "I wrote a line to the curate of Mary's; who sent me word, 'He should be glad of my assistance.' So I preached there (another gentleman reading prayers) to as gay and senseless a congregation as I ever saw." After sermon the curate requested the favour of Mr. Wesley's company in the morning, to which the latter assented; and found him an agreeable, friendly man, but strongly opposed to lay-preachers, or preaching out of a church; and he said that the Archbishop of Dublin would not suffer any such irregularities in his diocese.

Mr. Wesley continued in Dublin, at this time,

for more than a fortnight, where he was hospitably entertained by Mr. Lunell, the principal member of the society which had been formed. He preached every morning and evening to immense congregations: waited on the archbishop, and conversed with his Grace for the space of two or three hours; and having examined the society, which then consisted of about two hundred and eighty members, and explained the general Rules to them, he sailed for England, without visiting any of the country parts of Ireland.

Shortly after this, Mr. Charles Wesley arrived in Dublin, accompanied by Mr. C. Perronet, son to the Rev. Vincent Perronet, the venerable and pious vicar of Shoreham. He preached on Oxmantown-Green, near the barracks, to an immense concourse of people of all persuasions; and afterwards visited Athlone, Cork, Bandon, and different other parts of the kingdom. Near Athlone his life was in imminent danger from a popish mob, that had been collected and instigated by a priest to attack him and his companions on the road. Intelligence of this conspiracy, however, having been providentially conveyed to Athlone, a party of dragoons was ordered out for their protection. Mr. Wesley and his friends rode on, not suspecting the danger they were in, till within half a mile of the town, when the stones began to fly thick about them. Mr. Healy, one of his companions, having received a blow, fell senseless from his horse, and

would probably have been murdered, had not the appearance of the dragoons just at the moment dispersed the rabble and protected their intended victim.

Having spent a few days in Athlone, Mr. Charles Wesley returned to Dublin; and, before he sailed for England, he was gratified by the arrival of his brother, accompanied by Messrs. Meriton and Swindells. Mr. John Wesley now no longer confined himself to the house, as he had done in his former visit, but preached on Oxmantown-Green, and occasionally to the prisoners in Newgate. On the 30th of March, 1748, he proceeded for the first time to visit the country parts of Ireland. The congregations which attended him in every place were so large, that he was obliged frequently to preach in the open air. Many of the soldiers also heard him gladly wherever he went, and forty troopers were at this time members of the society at Philipstown. In many of the towns in the provinces of Leinster and Munster, and in some places in Connaught, societies were formed by the exertions of some of the lay-preachers who began to visit the interior of the country. At Athlone, Mr. Wesley could scarcely prevail upon the people to let him away at all. After having taken his leave of them, when he drew near to the turnpike, about a mile from the town, a multitude waited for him at the top of the hill, who falling back on every side to make way for him, then joined and closed

him in. Having sung two or three verses with them, he set forward, when on a sudden he was surprised by such a cry of men, women, and children, as he had never heard before. "Yet a little while," says he, speaking of this occurrence, "and we shall meet to part no more; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever."

Having returned to Dublin, Mr. Wesley had the satisfaction to find that the society was in a prosperous condition; and that in a city where peculiar obstacles presented themselves, religion was diffusing its salutary influence amongst a considerable number of the inhabitants. In the meantime those preachers who had come over from England to remain in this country, continued their labour with encouraging success. Mr. Swindells visited Cork and Limerick, and societies were formed in both these cities. In the former, however, a storm was collecting, which after a time burst forth with incredible fury upon the heads of all those who in any way had attached themselves to the Methodists in that city. Mr. Charles Wesley had visited Cork in the month of August, and had preached several times upon Hammond's Marsh, in the open air, to immense congregations of Roman Catholics as well as Protestants. By the bishop and clergy he had been treated with great respect and kindness; and he took frequent opportunities of rebutting an accusation which had been brought against him and his fellow-

labourers, that they railed against the clergy. "If," said he, "all our brethren, the clergy, were like-minded with some of them, how might their hands be strengthened by us! But we must have patience till the thing speaks for itself; and the mist of prejudice being removed, they will see clearly that all our desire is the salvation of souls and the establishment of the Church of England."

Mr. Charles Wesley remained in the neighbourhood of Cork for about a month, visiting Bandon, Kinsale, and other places, where societies were formed, and thousands attended his public ministry. The change produced, at least in the outward conduct of many, was apparent for some time throughout the whole city. Gross profligacy appeared to be ashamed to show its face, and the churches and other places of worship became crowded to excess. But a short time after his departure, a scene of the most disgraceful outrage commenced: and, for more than three months, a riotous mob, headed by a ballad-singer, whose name was Nicholas Butler, declared open war against the new reformers, as they called them, and all who attended their preaching.

Butler, who was the ringleader in these scenes of violence and outrage, a short time after they occurred, went to the city of Waterford, for the purpose of exciting similar disturbances. It appears he was as zealous in the cause of the master whom he had chosen to serve, as Mr. Wesley him-

self was for a revival of religion: but happening to quarrel with some who were as ready to shed blood as himself, his right arm was cut off in the fray, and the unhappy man dragged out the remainder of his life in that misery and wretchedness which profligacy and crime very frequently entail upon those who have been so zealously engaged in their service. His fellow-rioters in Cork were soon after intimidated by the soldiers in the garrison, many of whom began to attend the preaching of the Methodists. Peace was therefore at length restored; and the next time Mr. Wesley visited that city he preached without any disturbance.

Mr. Whitefield arrived in Ireland in the ensuing year; and was generally well received by the people. The mob at Cork had been put down, and all was peace and tranquillity. But on a second expedition to this country, he narrowly escaped with his life, from Oxmantown-Green, which he describes as being at that time the Moorfields of Dublin. Indeed the bitter spirit of the Roman Catholics was frequently evinced towards all who would give any countenance to the rising society. One of the priests would sometimes come, when a Methodist was preaching, and drive away his hearers like a flock of sheep. The preachers were frequently told, that it would be doing both God and the church service to burn them all together in one fire: and one of them, when he first visited the county of Kerry, was received with the

threat, that they would kill him, and make whistles of his bones. At Kilkenny, when the Roman Catholics were not sufficiently strong to make a riot with much hope of success, they gnashed at Mr. Wesley with their teeth, after he had been preaching in an old bowling-green, near the castle; and one of them cried, "Och! what is Kilkenny come to!"

Ireland, at the earlier period of the history of Methodism, was divided into seven circuits, and these were supplied by preachers who came over with Mr. Wesley, from time to time, out of England; but in a short time several were raised up from amongst the Irish themselves, who also became zealous labourers in the same cause throughout their native country. Some of these had been Roman Catholics, and when they were convinced of their errors, and found out the new and living way of faith in Christ, and love to God and man, they were proportionately zealous in their exertions for the salvation of their superstitious friends and benighted fellow-countrymen. Mr. Thomas Walsh was a remarkable instance of this kind. He was born at Bally Linn, in the county of Limerick, and carefully instructed in the peculiar tenets of the Church of Rome. However, his brother, who was a school-master, having, from conviction, renounced the errors of Popery, soon convinced Thomas of the sandy foundation on which he was building his hopes of eternal happiness. The re-

sult was, that he also separated himself from the Romish communion; applied himself to the study of the word of God; became an itinerant preacher in 1749; and, as he was a complete master of the Irish language, he was made extensively useful amongst his benighted countrymen.

Mr. Walsh's conversion from Popery was one of the sterling kind; and he continued to preach with great success in many parts both of England and Ireland. But, as he observes himself, the sword became too sharp for the scabbard; and he died at the age of twenty-eight, an old man, being worn out by his great and uninterrupted labours.

In 1752, Mr. Wesley again visited Ireland; and found the society in Dublin to consist of about four hundred persons, who had a little before erected the preaching-house that stands in White-friar-street. He then proceeded on his tour to the West and South of Ireland; held a conference in Limerick; and visited Cork, where the storm of persecution had entirely ceased. From this time the circuits were regularly supplied with preachers; conferences were held with them as with those of England; and the same discipline established as in other parts of the Connexion.

About four years after this Mr. Wesley, for the first time, paid a visit to the province of Ulster, and for ever after felt peculiar pleasure in going to that part of the country, in his biennial visits to Ireland. A few of the preachers had been labour-

ing there for some years; and had been eminently successful in opening new places for preaching, and in forming societies wherever they went. But, notwithstanding the comparative facility which the Protestant spirit of the North gave to them, of finding access to the people, they sometimes suffered severely in their efforts to do good to the souls of their fellow-creatures. Mr. John M'Burney, who was travelling in Ulster, was once invited to preach at a Mr. Perry's, a few miles from the town of Enniskillen. He accordingly went there with that intention: but, in the evening, while the congregation were singing a hymn, a large mob surrounded the house. Six of them rushed in armed with clubs, and immediately fell upon the people; but many of them, joining together, thrust the rioters out, and shut and fastened the door. On this they broke every pane of glass in the windows, and threw in a large quantity of stones. They then broke into the house through a weak part of the wall, and hauling out both men and women, beat them without mercy. They then dragged Mr. M'Burney out, whom they instantly knocked down: they continued beating him on the head and breast, while he lay senseless on the ground. Yet after a while, coming a little to himself, he got up; but, not being quite sensible, he staggered, and fell again. Then one of them set his foot upon his face, swearing that "he would tread the Holy Ghost out of him." Another ran

his stick into his mouth. As soon as he could speak, he said, "May God forgive you! I do." They then set him on his horse, and one of the ruffians got up behind him, and forced him to gallop down the rocky mountain to the town. There they kept him till a gentleman took him out of their hands, and entertained and lodged him in the most hospitable manner; but his bruises, on the head and breast in particular, would not suffer him to sleep. After lingering a few days, he died, at Clones, in consequence of this treatment. He preached almost to the last week of his life; and went to his reward, rejoicing in God his Saviour.

The good effects produced by Methodism were obvious in the conduct of its professors in general, not only in the outward reformation of their lives, but in some cases in which they were obliged to sacrifice their own private interest to the dictates of conscience. One remarkable instance of this kind was shown, in a case of shipwreck upon the Isle of Cale, off the coast of the county of Down. There were several Methodist Societies in that neighbourhood, and some of the members went wrecking with the rest of the people, and others bought, or received presents of the plundered goods. A report of this was brought to John Prickard, who was then travelling on the Lisburn circuit; and having hastened to inquire into it, he found that all the societies, except one, had, more or less, "been partakers of the accursed

thing." He therefore felt it his duty to preach repentance and restitution; and, with his heart almost broken, he read out sixty-three members on the following Sunday, in Downpatrick. He gave notice, however, that those who would make restitution should be admitted again into the society, but that those who would not, should have their names recorded in the general steward's book, with an account of their crime and obstinacy. This severity produced much of its desired effect, and removed that reproach which would otherwise have attached itself to the Methodists. Some persons, who did not belong to the society, but had merely attended as hearers, were so much affected by the exhortation and example, that they desired to make restitution with them. The owners of the vessel empowered Prickard to allow salvage; but, with a proper degree of austerity, he refused to do this, because the people, in the first instance, had been guilty of a crime. This affair deservedly raised the character of the Methodists in that neighbourhood; and it was observed by the gentry who resided in the place, that if the ministers of every other persuasion had acted as John Prickard did, most of the goods might have been saved.

In the summer of 1783, Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher visited Ireland, and spent a few weeks in Dublin, in compliance with the earnest solicitations of some of their Irish friends. During their stay in this city Mr. Fletcher's public and private exhortations

were attended with a remarkable blessing to many. Several clergymen, some of whom were eminent in the literary world, invited him to their houses and churches, and seemed to look upon themselves as highly honoured by his company. He frequently preached in the French Church, to the descendants of the Huguenot settlers, that had sought an asylum in this country from the sword of persecution in their own. Amongst his auditors upon these occasions were sometimes many persons who did not understand a sentence of what he delivered, as he preached in the French language; and some of them being asked what motive had brought them thither, replied, "We went to *look* at him, for heaven seemed to beam from his countenance." The principle of curiosity which prompts mankind in general, both learned and illiterate, to wish to see any person that is celebrated either in religion or politics, is perfectly pardonable, however they may be ridiculed for it under such a circumstance as this.

The last morning Mr. Fletcher passed in Dublin, Mr. Cox, his biographer, says, some friends who were aware of his very limited income, earnestly pressed him to accept of a small purse, not as a present, but as a debt justly due to him, for the expenses he had incurred on his journey. For a long time he declined their offer: but at length, finding them exceedingly importunate, he took the purse in his hand. "Well," said he, "do you

really force it upon me? Must I accept of it? Is it entirely mine? And may I do with it as I please?" "Yes, yes," they all replied. "God be praised," said he, raising his eyes to heaven. "Behold what a mercy is here! Your Poor's Fund was just out; I heard some of you complaining that it was never so low before. Take this purse; God has sent it to you, raised it among yourselves, and bestowed it upon your poor. You cannot deny me. It is sacred to them. God be praised! I heartily thank you, my dear kind brethren."

The preachers who succeeded this visit of Mr. Fletcher's in Dublin, as well as those who were in the city at the time, were lively, zealous men; and energetic in maintaining the discipline of the connexion. The consequence was, that the society increased till it became double what it had ever been before; and its prosperity gave occasion to Mr. Wesley to rejoice accordingly in his two last visits to this country. But as we shall have occasion subsequently to advert to these visits, it is not necessary to enlarge upon them in this place.

The origin of Methodism in Ireland was attended with much more felicitous circumstances than it had been in England. In this country there was no George Bell, with his nonsensical admirers, to bring a disgrace and odium on a real work of God in the land. Here we had no men who, in the silly dreams of enthusiasm, professed to be absolutely perfect, or fancied themselves immortal.

"The work," says Mr. Wesley, "was more pure. In all this time there were none of them headstrong or unadvisable: none that were wiser than their teachers: none who dreamed of being immortal, or infallibly incapable of temptation: in short, there were no whimsical or enthusiastic persons. All were calm and sober-minded."

Besides, in this country Methodism was wanted more than it had been even in England. In the latter country the principal thing that was required was to rouse the clergy to a sense of their duty, and to induce them to bestir themselves. But in such a country as Ireland, our church wants a system of aggression, as well as of conservation, and for this the government has never made any provision. Upon the principle of an establishment the clergy should consider all the people in the nation as their legitimate charge—but what would the present number of the Protestant clergymen be to the spiritual wants of the whole population of the country? In most places they find it more than they are able to accomplish, to attend to the calls of their Protestant parishioners. What, therefore, Bishop Berkeley desired to see, Methodism has, to some extent, accomplished in Ireland.

CHAPTER VIII.

METHODISM IN SCOTLAND.

JOHN KNOX, who was the apostle of the Scottish reformation, was, in the early part of his life, obliged to leave his native country, and seek an asylum on the Continent, from the rage of his enemies. In his exile he became acquainted with Calvin and some others of the foreign reformers, from whom he learned those opinions respecting church government which afterwards led to the adoption of Presbyterianism in Scotland. The efforts which were subsequently made by the government to restore episcopacy, and the solemn league and covenant entered into by the people to oppose its restoration, engendered a system of political Christianity in North Britain, that was by no means friendly to the growth of true piety or genuine religion. Nor was the secession which took place in that country, about the same time that Methodism took its rise in England, advantageous to the revival of vital godliness in the hearts of those that were concerned in it; as the Scottish

Seceders regarded opinions more than experimental religion itself.

But notwithstanding the religion of the heart appears to have been very low at this period in Scotland, there was much of the stern morality of the rigid Covenanters still remaining in the country: the discipline of the kirk was but little relaxed: the population had not outgrown the ecclesiastical establishment; and the lofty tone which Calvinism assumed in the theology of the Scots, left but little room for the prevalence of Methodism in that country.

About four years after Mr. Wesley first landed in Dublin, or in the month of April, 1751, he paid his first visit to Scotland, accompanied by Mr. Christopher Hopper: but as Mr. Whitefield had preceded him, at least ten years, it will be necessary to glance at his progress there, in order to take a view of the rise and progress of Methodism in North Britain.

Before Mr. Whitefield's separation from Mr. Wesley, he had been invited to Scotland by Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, two of the founders of the Secession Church in that country. He accordingly accepted their invitation, in the year 1741; and preached his first sermon in Scotland, in the Seceding meeting-house belonging to Mr. Ralph Erskine, at Dumferline. He was invited a few days after to attend a meeting of the Associate Presbytery, to which he most cheerfully went;

and when he found them, with a great deal of form, proceeding to constitute their meeting, and to choose a moderator, he inquired something of their intention; and was informed that it was for the purpose of discoursing with him, and setting him right about the matter of church government, and the Solemn League and Covenant. To this Mr. Whitefield replied, that they might save themselves the trouble, because he had no scruples upon that subject—and those were matters that did not enter into his plan. But the Associate Presbytery were not to be baffled so easily from their favourite project of making him a convert to their own peculiarities of opinion: they told him that every pin of the tabernacle was precious: and therefore they concluded that it was a matter of prime importance that he should be set right, especially as England, in which he had been educated, had revolted most with respect to church government. Mr. Whitefield replied, that, in every building, there were outside and inside workmen; that he considered himself called particularly to the latter, for the present; and, that if they thought it their duty to pursue the former, they might proceed in their own way, as he was resolved to do in his. They then pressed him to promise that he would preach only for them in Scotland, until he should consider the Solemn League and Covenant, and get farther light. "And why for them alone?" he inquired. To this Ralph Erskine replied, "They

were the Lord's people." "I then," says Mr. Whitefield, "asked, 'whether there were no other Lord's people but themselves? and, supposing all others were the devil's people, they certainly,' I told them, 'had more need to be preached to, and, therefore, I was more determined to go out into the high ways and hedges; and that if the Pope himself would lend me his pulpit, I would gladly proclaim the righteousness of Jesus Christ therein.' Soon after this the company broke up; and one of these otherwise venerable men immediately went into the meeting-house, and preached upon these words, 'Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The Watchman said, the morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will inquire, inquire ye; return, come.' I attended; but the good man so spent himself, in the former part of his sermon, in talking against prelacy, the common prayer-book, the surplice, the rose in the hat, and such like externals, that, when he came to the latter part of his text, to invite poor sinners to Jesus Christ, his breath was so gone, that he could scarce be heard. What a pity that the last was not first, and the first last! The consequence of all this was, an open breach. I retired, I wept, I prayed, and, after preaching in the fields, sate down and dined with them, and then took a final leave. At table, a gentlewoman said, she had heard that I had told some people that the Associate Presbytery were building a Babel. I

said, 'Madam, it is quite true; and I believe the Babel will soon fall down about their ears.' But enough of this. Lord, what is man—what the best of men—but men at the best!"

Mr. Whitefield was afterwards invited to Aberdeen by a minister of one of the kirks in that city; but there he found the spirit of intolerance as strong as he had experienced it to be amongst his Seceding friends at Dumferline. The minister by whom he was invited had a colleague as inquisitorial in his disposition as any of the zealots who had formerly preached and fought under the blue banners of the Covenant. He had prejudiced the magistrates so strongly against Mr. Whitefield, that when he arrived they refused to suffer him to preach in the kirk-yard. He was allowed, however, to officiate in his friend's pulpit, in the presence of an overflowing congregation. It was the other pastor's turn to preach in the afternoon: and, in the course of his prayer before the sermon, he mentioned Mr. Whitefield by name, and intreated the Lord to forgive the dishonour that had been put upon him, when that man was suffered to preach in that pulpit. But this was only preliminary to the attack which he made upon him in his sermon. He reminded his hearers that this person was a curate of the Church of England; and quoted some passages from his first printed discourses, which he averred were full of gross Arminianism. "Most of the congregation," says Mr.

Whitefield, "seemed surprised and chagrined; especially his good-natured colleague, who, immediately after sermon, without consulting me in the least, stood up, and gave notice that Mr. Whitefield would preach in about half an hour. The interval being so short, the magistrates returned into the sessions-house, and the congregation patiently waited, big with expectation of hearing my resentment. At the time appointed I went up, and took no other notice of the good man's ill-timed zeal, than to observe, in some part of my discourse, that if the good old gentleman had seen some of my later writings, wherein I had corrected several of my former mistakes, he would not have expressed himself in such strong terms. The people being thus diverted from controversy with man, were deeply impressed with what they heard from the word of God. All was hushed, and more than solemn. And on the morrow the magistrates sent for me, expressed themselves quite concerned at the treatment I had met with, and begged I would accept of the freedom of the city."

But notwithstanding the opposition which Mr. Whitefield was obliged to encounter upon his first entrance into Scotland, the electric power of his oratory soon opened his way wherever he went; and his popularity in that country became, in many respects, even greater than it had been in England. It was in Scotland he first found access to people of rank; and wherever he obtained a hear-

ing he was always successful in overcoming those prejudices which had been raised in the minds of the people against him. Few preachers have possessed the talent of natural eloquence in a more eminent degree than Mr. Whitefield, and his unaffected earnestness and indubitable sincerity gave a lasting effect to the impressions he was capable of making on the minds of his auditors. There are several remarkable instances related of the manner in which he impressed his hearers. A man at Exeter stood with stones in his pocket, and one in his hand, ready to throw at him; but he dropped it before the sermon was far advanced, and going up to him as soon as he had concluded his discourse, he said, "Sir, I came to hear you with an intention to break your head; but God, through your ministry, has given me a broken heart." A gentleman asked a ship-builder once what he thought of Mr. Whitefield. "Think!" said he, "I tell you, Sir, every Sunday that I go to my parish church, I can build a ship from stem to stern under the sermon; but, were it to save my soul, under Mr. Whitefield, I could not lay a single plank."

Mr. Hume, the historian, was frequently amongst his auditors in Edinburgh; and he pronounced him to be one of the most ingenious preachers he ever heard. One flight of his oratory is related on the authority of this gentleman, that is said to have produced an astonishing effect upon his congregation. "After a solemn pause, Mr. Whitefield thus

addressed his audience :—The attendant angel is just about to leave the threshold, and ascend to heaven; and shall he ascend and not bear with him the news of one sinner, among all the multitude, reclaimed from the error of his ways! To give the greater effect to this exclamation, he stamped with his foot, lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven, and cried aloud, Stop, Gabriel! Stop, Gabriel! Stop, ere you enter the sacred portals, and yet carry with you the news of one sinner converted to God." This address, as Mr. Hume states, was accompanied with such animated, yet natural action, that it surpassed any thing he ever saw or heard in his life.

But, perhaps, the power of persuasion which Mr. Whitefield possessed as a preacher, was never more strikingly exhibited than in the effect it produced upon Dr. Franklin, when he was preaching for the Orphan-house, at Savannah. Franklin's fiscal economy is well known by every one who is acquainted with his character; and he had determined not to give any thing towards the institution in question. "I did not," says the Doctor, "disapprove of the design; but as Georgia was then destitute of materials and workmen, and it was proposed to send them from Philadelphia at a great expense, I thought it would have been better to have built the house at Philadelphia, and brought the children to it. This I advised; but he was resolute in his first project, rejected my counsel, and

I therefore refused to contribute. I happened, soon after, to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the copper; another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and determined me to give the silver; and he finished so admirably, that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all." But Franklin was not the only person that was overcome by his powerful appeal upon this occasion. "At this sermon," he continues, "there was also one of our club, who, being of my sentiments respecting the building in Georgia, and suspecting a collection might be intended, had, by precaution, emptied his pockets before he came from home: towards the conclusion of the discourse, however, he felt a strong inclination to give, and applied to a neighbour, who stood near him, to lend him some money for the purpose. The request was fortunately made to, perhaps, the only man in the company who had the firmness not to be affected by the preacher. His answer was, 'At any other time, friend Hopkinson, I would lend to thee freely, but not now; for thee seems to me to be out of thy right senses."

That such a preacher would produce a powerful

effect in Scotland is by no means surprising; but, on his second visit to that country, it appears to have surpassed description, At Cambuslang the excitation was so great that one of his former friends, the Seceders, published a pamphlet, in which he ascribed the work that was going forward at that place to the influence of the devil; not being able otherwise to account for the powerful effect which Mr. Whitefield's preaching produced upon the minds of the people. And, notwithstanding it was by their own invitation Mr. Whitefield had first visited North Britain, the heads of the Seceders appointed a public fast, to humble themselves for his being in Scotland, and what they termed the delusion at Cambuslang.

In the year 1751, Colonel Galatin being then in quarters at Musselborough, near Edinburgh, pressed Mr. Wesley very strongly to pay him a visit: but when the latter mentioned this to Mr. Whitefield, he replied, "You have no business there: for your principles are so well known, that, if you spoke like an angel, none would hear you. And if they did, you would have nothing to do but to dispute with one and another from morning to night." To this Mr. Wesley answered, "If God sends me, people will hear. And I will give them no provocation to dispute: for I will studiously avoid controversial points, and keep to the fundamental truths of Christianity. And if any still begin to dispute, they may; but I will not

dispute with them." Accordingly he went, and was enabled to keep his word: for he cut off all occasion of dispute, by avoiding those points which he knew would lead him into controversy. At Musselborough his preaching was attended with a powerful effect. In the school-room where he delivered his discourse, the people remained as statues from the beginning of it to the end. And after the service was ended, one of the bailiffs of the town, with one of the elders of the kirk, came to him, and begged he would remain with them, if it were but two or three days, and they would fit up a far larger place than that in which he had preached, and prepare seats for the congregation. This, however, he was unable to do, as his time was fixed; and all he could promise them was the return of Mr. Hopper in a few days, to whom also large congregations gave a serious and attentive hearing.

In two years after, when Mr. Wesley again visited Scotland, he entered it on the side of Dumfries. He was received in Glasgow by Dr. Gillies, who invited him to preach in his church. "Surely," says Mr. Wesley, "with God nothing is impossible! Who would have believed five-and-twenty years ago, either that the minister would have desired it, or that I should have consented to preach in a Scotch kirk!" A short time after this, Mr. Wardrobe, a pious minister of the Church of Scotland, preached in Mr. Wesley's chapel at Newcastle, to the great amazement and consider-

able displeasure of some of the zealots among his own countrymen.

The first Wesleyan societies that were formed in Scotland were those of Musselborough and Dunbar; and, during his tour in that country, in 1757, Mr. Wesley was much surprised at the simplicity and teachableness of many who attended his ministry. Several of the preachers were subsequently employed in Scotland; but they found it an uncongenial soil for the culture of Methodism.

The prejudice which existed in Scotland against the Methodists, was strengthened by a pamphlet which Mr. Hervey was persuaded, by a Mr. Cudworth, an Antinomian teacher, to write and publish against Mr. Wesley. Cudworth boasted that Mr. Hervey had permitted him, "to put out and put in what he pleased" in this publication. In England this performance attracted but little of the public attention: but its republication in Scotland, with a bitter preface by Dr. Erskine, a man highly esteemed in that country for his orthodoxy, excited considerable prejudice against Methodism in North Britain.

Mr. Hervey, the author of this tract, was one of the first Methodists at Oxford. He was the son of a clergyman of the Church of England, and was born at Hardingston, a village about a mile from Northampton, in the beginning of the year 1714. He received the rudiments of his education at the free grammar school of Northampton, where he

spent nearly ten years in learning the Latin and Greek languages. This length of time taken up in acquiring such a knowledge of the classics as would prepare him for the university may appear strange, were it not accounted for by an odd whim of the master who would not suffer any of the boys under his care to learn faster than his own son. At the age of seventeen he was entered at Lincoln College, Oxford, where he became a pupil of Mr. Wesley's, and resided in the university about seven years, but without proceeding farther than his Batchelor's degree. To his tutor, in after life, he invariably expressed the warmest sense of gratitude for the kindness he had evinced towards him during his residence at Oxford. "Assure yourself, dear sir," says he, in one of his letters, "that I can never forget that tender-hearted and generous Fellow of Lincoln, who condescended to take such compassionate notice of a poor Undergraduate, whom almost every body condemned, and no man cared for his soul." In another of his letters written to Mr. Wesley, when he was in Georgia, he says, "As for me, I am still a most weak, corrupt creature. But, blessed be the unmerited mercy of God, and thanks be to your never-to-be-forgotten example, 'That I am what I am.'" "Do you, dear sir," says he again, "put up your prayers, and oh! let the mighty God set to his seal, that it may be unto me according to my heart's desire. Then will I invite you (my father shall I call you, or

my friend? for indeed you have been both unto me,) to meet me among the spirits of just men made perfect, since I am not like to see your face in the flesh any more for ever! Then will I bid you welcome; yea, I will tell of your love, before the universal assembly, at the tremendous tribunal."

Nothing depicts a more melancholy feature of the spirit and effects of religious controversy than that this amiable and excellent man, after all his professions of gratitude to Mr. Wesley, could be induced to dip his pen in gall, and to write with all the bitterness of a rancorous partizan, against his former friend, his father, and his benefactor. No man is to be blamed for standing forth in defence of that which he believes to be truth, no matter who may be his opponent, but the *animus* with which he treats an opposing friend may very fairly become the subject of animadversion.

Shortly after the republication of Mr. Hervey's tract, Mr. Taylor, one of the preachers, visited Glasgow, and for several weeks together continued occasionally to preach in the open air. When he arrived in that city first, having taken a lodging, he gave notice that he would preach on the Green: a table was accordingly carried to the place, and going there at the appointed time, he found two barbers' boys and two old women waiting. "My very soul," says he, "sank within me. I had travelled by land and by water near six hundred miles to this place, and behold my congregation!

None but they who have experienced it can tell what a task it is to stand out in the open air to preach to nobody, especially in such a place as Glasgow!" He mounted the table, however, and began to sing, at which he continued till about two hundred poor people collected about him. He preached to them as well as he could, and persevering in this manner, he was at length attended by large audiences. But his difficulties increased as the winter set in, and he was obliged at last to sell his horse for his own support. His patience, however, was not exhausted; success crowned his efforts; a place was provided for him to preach in; and a little society was formed, which soon increased to seventy members.

The preachers also penetrated into the Highlands; a society was formed at Inverness; and Mr. Wesley, after having visited that part of the country, on his return to Edinburgh, showed his liberality by partaking of the holy communion, after the Scottish custom, in the West Kirk in that city.

It may be supposed, however, that he saw the necessity of giving some explanation of his views upon certain matters, that were by no means considered trivial by the Scots, lest they should think him indifferent to all opinions, and willing to substitute a speculative latitudinarianism for the true liberality of a gospel minister. He therefore answered, before a large congregation at Dundee,

most of the objections which had been made to him. "I love plain dealing," said he, "do not you? I will use it now. Bear with me. I hang out no false colours, but show you all I am, all I intend, all I do. I am a member of the Church of England; but I love good men of every church. My ground is the Bible. Yea, I am a Bible-bigot. I follow it in all things, both great and small. Therefore, I always use a sort of *short private prayer* when I attend the public service of God. Do not *you?* Why do you not? Is not this according to the Bible? I *stand* whenever I sing the praises of God in public. Does not the Bible give you plain precedents for this? I always kneel before the Lord my Maker when I pray in public. I generally, in public, use the *Lord's prayer*, because Christ has taught me, when I pray, to say——. I advise every preacher connected with me, whether in England or Scotland, herein to tread in my steps."

With a few of the Scottish ministers, Mr. Wesley's plainness of speech had its effect: but, in a short time, those who treated him with respect, and rejoiced in his labours, being taken to a better world, he felt the different spirit of their successors. Methodism was still an object of abhorrence to the high Calvinists of Scotland. Some refused to administer the Lord's Supper to the members of the Methodist society, or even to baptize any of their children. It was also put forward as a very weighty

argument against the whole system, that it was no part of the church of Christ, because it wa s without the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. These indignities Mr. Wesley bore for a time with patience; but having, in the year 1784, assumed to himself the power of ordaining preachers for America, at the Conference held the following year in London, being assisted by two other Presbyters of the Church of England, he exercised the same power with reference to Scotland, and set apart John Pawson, Thomas Hanby, and Joseph Taylor "to minister in Scotland," and thus erected his society in that country into an independent church.

As the subject of those ordinations shall be treated of in another place, it is only necessary, for the present, merely to mention the fact. It may be observed, however, that the great object of giving Methodism a permanent footing in Scotland was not answered by this measure. It still continued, notwithstanding its partial progress in some particular places, to feel that Scotland was not the soil in which it could have any great or general prosperity. "There certainly is," says Mr. Pawson, "a very wide difference between the people of Scotland and the inhabitants of England. The former have, from their earliest years, been accustomed to hear the leading truths of the gospel, mixed with Calvinism, constantly preached, so that these truths are become quite familiar to them; but,

in general, they know little or nothing of Christian experience; and genuine religion, or the life and power of godliness, is in a very low state in that country. I am fully satisfied that it requires a far higher degree of the Divine influence, generally speaking, to awaken a Scotchman out of the dead sleep of sin, than an Englishman. So greatly are they bigoted to their own opinions, their mode of church government, and way of worship, that it does not appear probable that our preachers will ever be of much use to that people: and, in my opinion, except those who are sent to Scotland exceed their own ministers in heart-searching, experimental preaching, closely applying the truth to the consciences of the hearers, they may as well never go thither."

CHAPTER IX.

METHODISM IN AMERICA.

WHATEVER may be thought by its greatest enemies respecting the utility of Methodism in Great Britain and Ireland, there can be but one opinion about the necessity of some such auxiliary when it was introduced into the British colonies in North America. In that country, the scattered state of the population was as unfavourable to the interests of religion, as it was to the designs and purposes of government; and, therefore, little could be effected by a stated or localized ministry. In the year 1606, James I. formed two companies for the colonization of New England, then included under the general name of Virginia: but no remarkable settlement was established, till some of the English Puritans, wearied out with the civil broils in the subsequent reign, fled thither, and established in that settlement such an ecclesiastical tyranny as they had projected, but left unfinished in their own country. As religious

toleration formed no part of their creed, they persecuted all the emigrants, who, like themselves, had left their native land to find a more comfortable habitation, but who happened to differ with them either in modes of worship or religious sentiments. The Quakers, in particular, notwithstanding their peaceable demeanour as members of civil society, were objects of their most bigoted and rancorous resentment; and were treated by those zealots with a degree of cruelty and inhumanity that would be disgraceful to the most brutalized commonwealth in the world.

Time, however, necessarily relaxed those rigours, at a subsequent period, which had nearly banished mercy and pure religion from the New England states; and, in the year 1729, a remarkable revival took place there, under the preaching of Dr. Jonathan Edwards. The labours also of Mr. Elliot and Mr. Brainard were made the means of turning many of the Indians, as well as some of the settlers, from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the service of the living God. The zealous preachers raised up afterwards by the energetic activity of Mr. Whitefield, became the most numerous body in New England; but, notwithstanding their number and extensive usefulness, the old, wise, literary Presbyterians, who valued themselves upon being descended from their Puritanical ancestors, in a synod held by their own party, formally thrust out or excommunicated the majority, de-

claring they would have no ministerial union with such an illiterate body of men. This, however, did not check the zeal of the latter; they continued their exertions, till the prevalence of formality on the one hand and of Antinomianism on the other, counteracted the effects of their labours, and disappointed all their expectations.

With regard to the other states, very little attention had been paid in them to religious matters at all. Indeed, the members of the British government had acted towards their colonies with such a contempt for their spiritual concerns as could not fail to excite the displeasure of heaven, and provoke the Disposer of human events to take them out of their hands and place them in circumstances more favourable to their eternal concerns. In many parts of the Southern states, the people were destitute of every thing connected with Christianity but the name: the ordinances of religion were almost totally unknown; and the demoralizing effect of such a state of things must have been frightfully extensive. "The first European inhabitants," says Dr. Secker, "too many of them, carried but little sense of Christianity abroad with them. A great part of the rest suffered it to wear out gradually, and their children grew, of course, to have yet less than they, till, in some countries, there were scarce any footsteps of it left beyond the mere name. No teacher was known, no religious assembly was held; the sacrament of baptism was not administered for

near *twenty years* together, nor that of the Lord's Supper for near *sixty*, amongst many thousands of people, who did not deny the obligation of these duties, but lived, nevertheless, in a stupid neglect of them." Nor were these evils greatly remedied by the exertions of the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts:" for, though they sent out missionaries from time to time, either for want of information or want of zeal, those clergymen generally settled where they were least wanted, and the poor deserted sheep in the wilderness were still left without any shepherd to feed or to guide them.

Whilst the European settlers in the different provinces were thus neglected, it is no wonder that the descendants of the aboriginal inhabitants were left without any effort's being made to instruct them in the truths of the gospel of Christ. The Indians of North America are certainly a very interesting race of men; and, though we call them savages, because their manners are different from ours, they possess many qualities which, if influenced by the salutary principles of religion, would render them as amiable a people as upon the face of the earth. But, instead of endeavouring to ameliorate their condition, by leading them to know "the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent," the different European powers that have from time to time made settlements in their country, have robbed them of their lands, demoralized their habits,

and set such an example before them as must naturally disgust them with that system of religion by which they conclude their oppressors are influenced.

For a few years prior to the introduction of Methodism into North America, several members of the society had been emigrating from England and Ireland, and settling in different parts of that extensive continent. One of these, an Irishman named Philip Embury, who had been a local preacher in his own country, began to preach in the city of New York, and formed a society that first met together in his own house, but afterwards rented a large room for that purpose. It happened that Mr. Webb, a lieutenant in the army, at that time held the appointment of barrack-master at Albany; and, having heard of Embury's proceedings, he paid him a visit, and preached in his uniform both at New York and Philadelphia, where he had large congregations; and, with the assistance of his friends, erected a chapel in the former city, which was the first Wesleyan Methodist preaching-house built on the continent of America.

Encouraged by success, and influenced by an ardent desire to do good, this officer wrote to Mr. Wesley, informing him of the beginning that had been made, and earnestly requesting that he would send out missionaries from the ensuing conference, to carry forward the work which had been so auspiciously begun. About the same time, a letter

was received in England from a man named Thomas Bell, at Charlestown, in which were the following words: "Mr. Wesley says, the first message of the preachers is to the lost sheep of England. And are there none in America? They have strayed from England into the wild woods here, and they are running wild after this world. They are drinking their wine in bowls, and are jumping and dancing, and serving the devil, in the groves and under the green trees. And are not these lost sheep? And will none of the preachers come here? Where is Mr. Brownfield? Where is John Pawson? Where is Nicholas Manners? Are they living, and will they not come?"

The subject of an American mission having been taken up at the next meeting of conference, Mr. Richard Boardman and Mr. Joseph Pilmoor offered themselves for the service; and as the society in New York had contracted a debt for their building, the connexion in England sent them fifty pounds by these preachers, as a token of brotherly love. The missionaries landed at Philadelphia in the year 1769, where Mr. Webb had already formed a society consisting of about one hundred members. A local preacher from Ireland, named Robert Strawbridge, had also settled in Maryland, and preaching there, had formed some societies. To the latter place, therefore, Pilmoor first directed his attention, whilst Boardman took charge of the society in New York; and both sent home the

most pleasing account of their success, and of the widely extended prospect which now lay before them. About two years after, Mr. Wesley sent over Mr. Richard Wright and Mr. Francis Asbury, the latter of whom proved not inferior to himself in zeal, activity, and perseverance. He perceived that his ministry was wanted more in the villages and scattered plantations than in the large and populous towns, and therefore he spent the most of his time in the interior of the country, preaching to the scattered settlers, and forming societies in different places. In less than two years more, Mr. Thomas Rankin and Mr. George Shadford were sent from England to assist their brethren: and continued labouring for five years on that continent, travelling through all the states between New York and North Carolina inclusive. "At our first little conference in Philadelphia, July 1773," says Mr. Rankin, "we had about a thousand in the different societies, and six or seven preachers; and, in May, 1777, we had forty preachers in the different circuits, and about seven thousand members in the societies, besides many hundreds of negroes, who were convinced of sin, and many of them happy in the love of God. Were it not for the civil war, I have reason to believe the work of God would have flourished in a more abundant manner, as both rich and poor gladly embraced the truths of the gospel, and received the preachers with open arms."

The revolution, by which the States secured their independence of the mother-country, in its immediate effects, interrupted the progress of Methodism in America, or it would have increased more rapidly in the Western world than ever it had done in England itself. At the beginning of this unhappy contest, like most wise and liberal-minded men, Mr. Wesley was inclined to think, that the conduct of the British government was not altogether justifiable: but when the real intention of the colonists became more manifest, he saw good reason for altering his opinion, and published "A Calm Address" to the Americans, in which he examined the question, whether the legislature of England had power to tax her colonies or not. The mode of reasoning which he adopted in this little pamphlet evinced, not only the sound constitutional principles by which he was influenced, but a power of discrimination between right and wrong that did honour to the man by whom such sentiments were delivered. After having ably exposed the fallacy of the popular argument, that every freeman consented to the laws by which he was governed, he laid the charge of all the existing troubles at the door of the republican party in England. "My opinion is this," says he: "we have a few men in England who are determined enemies to monarchy. Whether they hate his present Majesty on any other ground than because he is a king, I know not; but they

cordially hate his office, and have for some years been undermining it with all diligence, in hopes of erecting their grand idol, their dear commonwealth, upon its ruins. I believe they have let very few into their design (although many forward it, without knowing anything of the matter;) but they are steadily pursuing it, as by various other means, so, in particular, by inflammatory papers, which are industriously and continually dispersed throughout the towns and country. By this method they have already wrought thousands of the people even to the pitch of madness. By the same, only varied according to your circumstances, they have likewise enflamed America. I make no doubt but these very men are the original cause of the present breach between England and her colonies. And they are still pouring oil into the flame, studiously incensing each against the other, and opposing, under a variety of pretences, all measures of accommodation. So that, although the Americans, in general, love the English, and the English, in general, love the Americans, (all, I mean that are not yet cheated and exasperated by these artful men,) yet the rupture is growing wider every day, and none can tell where it can end. These good men hope it will end in the total defection of North America from England. If this were effected, they trust the English in general would be so irreconcileably disgusted, that they should be able, with, or without foreign assistance, entirely to overturn the government."

The station which Mr. Wesley assigned to a few republicans in England, as the prime movers in these disputes between the mother-country and her American colonies, is the only point upon which he was mistaken: they were the abettors and fomenters of this civil discord, but the Americans had early imbibed republican principles from their puritanical ancestors, who were the founders of the New England states. Of this he was afterwards convinced himself. "I allow," said he, "that the Americans were strongly exhorted, by letters from England, 'never to yield, or lay down their arms, till they had their own terms, which the government would be *constrained* to give them in a short time.' But those measures were concerted long before this,—long before either the tea-act or the stamp-act existed, only they were not digested into form. Forty years ago, when my brother was in Boston, it was the general language there, 'we must shake off the yoke; we never shall be a free people till we shake off the English yoke;' and the late acts of parliament were not the *cause* of what they have since done, but merely the occasion they laid hold on."

An attack which was subsequently made upon Mr. Wesley by some of the American partizans in England, particularly by a letter from Mr. Caleb Evans, a Baptist minister at Bristol, again involved Mr. Fletcher in a controversy for the defence of his friend. "My reverence for God's word," said

that excellent man, "my duty to the king, and regard for my friend; my love to injured truth, and the consciousness of the sweet liberty which I enjoy under the government, call for this little tribute of my pen; and I pay it so much the more cheerfully, as few men in the kingdom have had a better opportunity of trying which is most eligible, a republican government, or the mild-tempered monarchy of England. I lived more than twenty years the subject of two of the mildest republics of Europe: I have been, for above that number of years, the subject of your sovereign; and, from sweet experience, I can set my seal to this clause of the king's speech, at the opening of this session of parliament, 'to be a subject of Great Britain, with all its consequences, is to be the happiest subject of any civil government in the world.'" He pressed upon his opponent, not only the authority of Scripture enjoining the duty of submission to "the powers that be," but also of the articles of Calvin's confession of faith, in which that duty is expressly recognized; and then proceeded:—"Sir, you are a Calvinist; you follow the French reformer, when he teaches the absolute reprobation, and unavoidable damnation, of myriads of poor creatures yet unborn. Oh! forsake him not when he follows Christ, and teaches that God (not the people) is to be acknowledged the author of power and government, and that we are bound to bear cheerfully, for his sake, the yoke of scriptural

subjection to our governors! Be entreated, sir, to rectify your false notion of liberty. The liberty of Christians and Britons does not consist in bearing no yoke, but in bearing a yoke made easy by a gracious Saviour and a gracious sovereign."

A clear and strong sense of duty was the only motive that induced Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher to engage in this political contest; and it has been well observed by Dr. Southey, concerning the former, "it is not the least of his merits, that he was one of the first persons to expose the fallacy and foresee the consequences of those political principles which were then beginning to convulse the world." Forty thousand copies of his "Calm Address," which was written before the war had actually commenced, were printed in the course of three weeks. But, notwithstanding he considered himself acting perfectly in character as a minister of Christ, while pleading the cause of his king and country, he saw the imprudence of involving the preachers who were then in America in any disputes upon the same subject, and he therefore wrote to them warning them against taking any part in the controversy that was going forward. It was, however, a thing almost impossible, that, in a country in which the flames of rebellion had broken out in every quarter, men of such well-known and sterling loyalty as the Methodist preachers have invariably been, could be altogether silent, and express no opinion upon

passing events. The apprehensions of some were so strong upon this subject, that a friend to the Methodists got possession of all the copies of the "Calm Address" which were sent to New York, and destroyed them, foreseeing the danger to which the preachers would be exposed, if a pamphlet so unpopular in its doctrines should find its way among the people.

The part, however, which the founder of Methodism took upon this political question could not be entirely concealed from the American people; and the preachers were therefore exposed to imminent danger from the suspicions and violence of the rebels. Asbury alone had resolution enough to maintain his post; but was at length obliged to retire from public view, and to conceal himself for two years in the house of a friend. In this place of retirement he held two conferences with all the preachers he could collect in the midst of the troubles. But a gentleman of Delaware, having given him a strong letter of recommendation, he again ventured abroad, and continued to travel through the States in perfect safety.

Attached from principle, as well as from early prepossessions to the British government, and doubtful concerning the merits of the war, many of the preachers, after it was over, refused to take the oaths of allegiance to the States in which they respectively laboured, and were consequently exposed to fines and imprisonment. Sometimes,

when they were brought before their judges, being permitted to make their own defence, they bore such a pointed testimony against sin, and spoke with such energy upon the doctrines of the gospel, that the judges were at a loss to know how to dispose of them. It is said that Mr. Moore, a preacher in Baltimore, delivered, on one of those occasions, such a sermon from the bar as filled the judges and the whole court with admiration, at the elegance of his diction, and the strength of his arguments. Influenced, probably, by a desire to deliver the judges from the unnecessary trouble that was given them, as well as from a spirit of candour, the Assembly of Maryland at length passed an act expressly to allow the Methodist preachers, so called, to exercise their function, without taking the oath of allegiance.

Previous to the passing of this act, Mr. Chew, one of the preachers, was brought before Mr. Downs, then sheriff of the county, who demanded whether he was a minister of the gospel, and having received an answer in the affirmative, he required him to take the oath of allegiance. Mr. Chew replied that he had doubts on his mind, and therefore must decline to comply at the present. The sheriff then informed him, that he was bound on oath to execute the laws, and, if he persevered in his refusal, he must commit him to prison. The preacher calmly replied, that he had no wish to be in any way the cause of perjury, and therefore was

perfectly resigned to suffer the penalty incurred. "You are a strange man," said the sheriff, "and I cannot bear to punish you. I will therefore make my own house your prison." Mr. Chew was accordingly committed under his hand and seal, and kept in his own house for three months, during which time the sheriff was brought under a serious concern for the salvation of his soul, and his lady found peace with God through the atoning blood of Christ. They both soon afterwards joined the Methodist Society, and, with the assistance of some neighbouring gentlemen, Mr. Downs built a preaching-house for the society at Tuckaho, the place of his residence.

Calamitous as all these circumstances were, another that was unforeseen soon threatened the dissolution of Methodism in America, unless some remedy could be applied to the evil. Before the civil war, the prevailing profession of religion in the Southern States had been that of the church of England: but as the clergy had all been loyalists, they were obliged to fly out of the country during the troubles: the property of the church was confiscated; and, when the independence of the States was acknowledged, none of it was restored, nor was there any provision made for supplying the place of the former establishment. The Methodists had hitherto been members of the church of England, but being deprived of their clergy, they found themselves destitute of the ordinances of religion

which they were accustomed to receive at their hands. They could not obtain baptism for their children, or the Lord's Supper for themselves, even in those cases in which they were willing to accept of it, from any of the sectarian ministers, unless they would leave the society to which they belonged, and enter their respective communions. Grieved on this account, and seeing no mode themselves by which their wants might be supplied, in the year 1778, a considerable number of them earnestly importuned Mr. Asbury to take some measure that the people might no longer be deprived of those privileges which they believed they ought to enjoy as members of the church of Christ. Mr. Asbury's attachment to the church of England was at that time very strong; and, as he was still tenacious of the primitive plan of Methodism, he felt himself unable to procure them any redress. He advised them to wait till circumstances should prepare the way for what they wished; but it was not likely that they could be induced to act upon this advice. A majority of the preachers, therefore, separating themselves from him, and consequently from Mr. Wesley, elected three of their senior brethren to ordain others by the imposition of hands, to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper to such persons as were willing to receive them under these circumstances.—Asbury, however, by all the address that was in his power, brought them back one by one; and at

a subsequent conference, this ordination was declared to be unscriptural and invalid, and a perfect reunion took place between the two parties.

This schism in the Methodist body in America was healed just as the peace was concluded: and, as soon as a communication was opened with England, Asbury sent a representation of the case to Mr. Wesley. He informed him of the great anxiety of the people's minds for want of the sacraments: that thousands of their children were unbaptized, and that the members of the societies in general had not partaken of the Lord's Supper for many years. Mr. Wesley considered the subject, and formed a design of drawing up a plan of church government, and of establishing a system of ordination for his Trans-Atlantic societies. This intention he communicated to Dr. Coke, a clergyman who had attached himself to the Methodists; and, without some account of whom, a sketch of the history of these transactions would be very imperfect.

Thomas Coke, who was the only child of Bartholomew Coke, Esq. of Brecon, in South Wales, was born in the year 1747, and from his infancy was an object of the fondest solicitude with both his parents. His father having died while he was yet young, the care of his education devolved on his mother. At the age of seventeen he was entered a gentleman commoner of Jesus College, Oxford. While he was pursuing his studies at the

university, he unhappily imbibed those principles of unbelief that were but too common at the time in that ancient seat of learning. By a serious perusal, however, of discourses and dissertations of Bishop Sherlock's, all his sceptical reasonings and objections vanished, and he became a decided convert to the truth of the Christian revelation. When he had arrived at the age of twenty-one, he found himself possessed of a competent fortune; was chosen a common-council man of his native town; and subsequently filled the office of chief magistrate there, to the satisfaction and benefit of all classes of the inhabitants. Having prospects in the church that were considerably flattering, he afterwards obtained holy orders, and in June, 1775, he took out his degree of Doctor of Laws. Disappointed, however, in some of his expectations, he accepted the curacy of South Petherton, in Somersetshire; and as an important change had been wrought in his own mind, he became too zealous and too evangelical for many of his parishioners, and the rector of the parish was prevailed upon to dismiss him.

Dr. Coke's circumstances, however, were such as raised him above want, and enabled him to despise the loss of a curacy, from any pecuniary motive; but the door of that general usefulness, at which he so ardently aimed, seemed now closed against him for ever, and this apprehension produced a considerable degree of mental suffering.

While his mind was distressed on account of this circumstance, he met with Mr. Wesley, on the 13th of August, 1776, at the house of the Rev. Mr. Brown, of Kingston, near Taunton. "A union," says Mr. Wesley, "then began, which, I trust, shall never end." Dr. Coke attended the conference, for the first time, the following year; and ever after devoted his energies, his time, and his talents, in promoting the interests of religion and truth as a member of the Methodist connexion.*

Long before the application had come from America to Mr. Wesley respecting the wants of

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* This excellent and laborious minister of Christ terminated his earthly course, in the 67th year of his age, on his voyage to the East, for the purpose of establishing a mission in Ceylon and Continental India. In company with six other missionaries, he sailed from Portsmouth, on the 30th December, 1813, and had proceeded within a few degrees of the Equator, when, on the night of the 2d of May, he retired to his cabin, and on the following morning was found by his servant a lifeless corpse. His death, it is supposed, was occasioned by apoplexy, to which, from the make of his body, and the nature of his constitution, he appeared to have been somewhat predisposed. On the evening of the same day, after the funeral service was concluded, his remains were committed to the great deep, in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection, in latitude 2 deg. 22 min. south, and in longitude 59 deg. 29 min. east from London. The name of Coke and of Missions will ever be associated in the minds of those who are labouring for the extension of the gospel amongst the heathen, through Methodistic agency.

his societies in that country, he says, he had been convinced by Lord King's Account of the Primitive Church, that bishops and presbyters were essentially the same order, and consequently had the same right to ordain: a position that, in our judgment, is much easier assumed than proved. Having, therefore, resolved on the line of conduct he would pursue, at the conference held in Leeds, in the year 1784, he declared his intention of sending Dr. Coke and some other preachers to America. Mr. Richard Whatcoat and Mr. Thomas Vasey offered themselves as missionaries for that purpose, and were accepted. Before they sailed, Mr. Wesley abridged the Book of Common Prayer for the use of the American Methodists, and wrote to Dr. Coke then in London, desiring him to meet him in Bristol, to receive fuller powers; and to bring the Rev. Mr. Creighton along with him, another clergyman who had attached himself to the Methodist connexion. When Mr. Wesley proposed to Dr. Coke that he, in the character of a presbyter of the church of England, should invest him with episcopal powers, it would appear that the Doctor had some doubts on his mind respecting the validity of such an ordination; but a perusal of Lord King's work soon made a convert of him also; and it seems not to have occurred to either the one or the other that if the presbyterial and episcopal orders be the same, the proposed consecration was useless; for Dr. Coke was a presbyter of

the church of England as well as Mr. Wesley, and consequently as good a bishop as himself. With the assistance, however, of the Doctor and Mr. Creighton, Mr. Wesley ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, presbyters for the Methodist church of America, and afterwards consecrated Dr. Coke, a superintendent or bishop, giving him letters of ordination under his hand and seal to that effect: and, at the same time, he wrote a letter, to be printed and circulated in America, containing an account of the transaction, and an apology for what he had done.

When Dr. Coke and the missionaries arrived at New York, Mr. Asbury, the bishop elect, was not there, and the Doctor would take no step till he should consult with his colleague about the plans they were in future to pursue. On his way southward to meet him, he was introduced to the governor of Pensylvania; and when he had finished his sermon one day in a chapel in the state of Delaware, a plain, robust man came up to him in the pulpit, and kissed him, pronouncing, at the same time, a primitive salutation. This was no other than his colleague himself. On a little consultation, it was agreed that a general conference of the preachers should be convoked; and accordingly out of eighty-one American preachers, sixty assembled on Christmas-eve at Baltimore, where the form of government, and the manner of worship for the Methodists in America, which Mr. Wesley

had arranged, were accepted and established. The name of superintendent was laid aside, and that of bishop was substituted in its place; and, in pursuance of Mr. Wesley's instructions, and by virtue of the authority derived from him, Dr. Coke consecrated Mr. Asbury a bishop of the Methodist episcopal church in America.

Dr. Coke's liberal manners and rank in life gained him great popularity in America, and were the means of advancing the interests of Methodism in that country to an extensive degree. A Methodist college, which was subsequently burned to the ground, was soon after erected about twenty-eight miles from Baltimore, and named Cokesbury college, after the two bishops. The ardour of Dr. Coke's disposition, however, and the vehemence of his zeal, were so imprudently exhibited in opposition to slavery, that he had many perilous encounters in that country, and his life was in jeopardy on several occasions; but being convinced of the injudiciousness of this, on his second visit to America, he let the question of emancipation rest, rather than encounter such opposition as he perceived had greatly impeded the progress of the cause in which he was engaged.

In the progress of Methodism in America, while vast congregations met together in the woods to hear the gospel preached to them, there was much of that wildness and extravagance that might be expected from a half-civilized people assembled

under such circumstances. But however some of the American Methodists may be condemned for what has been justly deemed disorder and extravagance in their meetings, one thing is certain, that in many parts of the country the people must have remained altogether without religious teachers of any description, had it not been for the Methodist preachers. Some of the States had been in a deplorable way for want of religious instruction. It is said that the people of Delaware had scarcely ever heard preaching of any kind, when Freeborn Garretson, a native preacher, visited that country in the course of his itinerancy. Meeting a man one day, and wishing to enter into religious conversation with him, he asked him if he knew Jesus Christ: the man replied that he did not know where he lived. Garretson repeated the question, thinking it probable that it had not been distinctly heard; but the other again replied that he knew no such person in that country.

One interesting object of missionary solicitude amongst the Methodists in North America, has for some years back been the moral condition of the Indians. The schools they have established for the children of these much neglected people, and the exertions of the missionaries amongst the different tribes of the wild aborigines of that part of the western world, must ultimately be crowned with an abundant blessing by the Great Lord of the harvest. To be a successful missionary, it requires

not only a sufficient degree of zeal, but an acquaintance with the character of the people whose conversion is attempted. The notions which some of the Indian tribes have entertained of politeness, have raised one great difficulty in the way of Christian missionaries. They consider it the highest rudeness to contradict or deny the truth of any thing that is asserted in their presence, and hence it becomes very difficult to know their minds, or what impression is made upon them by any thing that is delivered in their hearing. They listen with patience to the truths of the gospel, and give their usual tokens of assent and approbation; and one would think they were convinced, when it is merely a matter of civility on their part. One of Dr. Franklin's anecdotes respecting them is highly illustrative of this trait in the Indian character.

"A Swedish minister," says he, "having assembled the chiefs of the Sasquehannah Indians, made a sermon to them, acquainting them with the principal historical facts on which our religion is founded; such as the fall of our first parents by eating an apple; the coming of Christ to repair the mischief; his miracles and sufferings, &c. When he had finished, an Indian orator stood up to thank him. 'What you have told us,' says he, 'is all very good. It is indeed bad to eat apples. It is better to make them all into cider. We are much obliged by your kindness in coming so far to tell us those things which you have heard from your

mothers. In return, I will tell you some of those which we have heard from ours.—In the beginning, our fathers had only the flesh of animals to subsist on; and if their hunting was unsuccessful, they were starving. Two of our young hunters having killed a deer, made a fire in the woods to broil some parts of it. When they were about to satisfy their hunger, they beheld a beautiful young woman descend from the clouds, and seat herself on that hill which you see yonder among the blue mountains. They said to each other, 'It is a spirit that perhaps has smelt our broiled venison, and wishes to eat of it: let us offer some to her.' They presented her with the tongue: she was pleased with the taste of it, and said, 'Your kindness shall be rewarded; come to this place after thirteen moons, and you shall find something that will be of great benefit in nourishing you and your children to the latest generations.' They did so, and, to their surprise, found plants they had never seen before; but which, from that ancient time, have been constantly cultivated among us, to our great advantage. Where her right hand had touched the ground, they found maize; where her left hand had touched it, they found kidney-beans; and where she had sat on it, they found tobacco.' The good missionary, disgusted with this idle tale, said, 'What I delivered to you were sacred truths; but what you tell me is mere fable, fiction, and falsehood.' The Indian, offended, re-

plied, 'My brother, it seems your friends have not done you justice in your education; they have not well instructed you in the rules of common civility. You saw that we, who understand and practise those rules, believed all your stories, why do you refuse to believe ours?' "

But notwithstanding this readiness to assent to what is proposed to them, makes it difficult for the missionary employed among the Indians, to know when they are really convinced of the truths of the gospel, yet the labours of the Methodists have not been without effect in this department of their missions; and they have had sufficient success to encourage them to persevere, and to hope that the time is not far distant when the light of evangelical truth shall dispel those clouds of darkness that have enveloped the minds of the aboriginal Americans, and when they shall know the truth, and the truth shall make them free.

Upon the whole, the comparative increase of Methodism in America has been astonishing, considering the proportion of the population to that of Great Britain. When the Society in the States was erected into an independent church, in 1784, it then consisted of about fifteen thousand members; but such was the rapid increase in the six following years, that they amounted to between sixty and seventy thousand at the time of Mr. Wesley's death. Nor has prosperity, as it respects numbers, ceased to crown the labours of the

Methodists with success: by the return made in the year 1837 it appears that the number of members under the care of the several conferences of the United States of America, was then 658,574, being an increase upon the preceding year of 7,893. Under the Wesleyan Methodist Church, as it is called, in Upper Canada, not including the Indian settlements, the number was 14,000; besides 11,503 members that are under the care of the British Conference, making a total in all of 684,077 members on the Continent of North America. So that, in fact, Methodism is the predominant religious profession in that country.

CHAPTER X.

METHODISM IN THE WEST INDIES.

The West Indian Islands, which are sometimes called the Columbian Archipelago, extend in the form of an arch from East Florida to the mouths of the Orinoco. When they were first discovered by Columbus, he imagined that he had reached India by a western course, and, therefore, gave the islands the name of the West Indies. Considering them the great mart of slavery until very recently, it could not be expected that they should prove a very congenial soil for religion. The slave trade, it is well known, was as demoralizing in its effects upon those persons who carried on an infamous traffic in the sale of human beings, as upon the unhappy victims of their avarice or cupidity.

About the year 1758, Mr. Nathaniel Gilbert, Speaker of the House of Assembly in Antigua, was in England; and Mr. Wesley baptized some negroes who were in his service, at Wandsworth. Mr. Gilbert was a man of piety and zeal, and wishing to promote the cause of religion in that

part of the western world, he endeavoured to prevail upon Mr. Fletcher to go with him to the West Indies, but was unsuccessful. He returned, therefore, without any minister or preacher, but not without an ardent desire to be as extensively useful as possible himself. "About two weeks before we settled," says he, "I signified to one or two persons, that as there was no service at church in the afternoon, any person disposed to join my family was welcome. I had on the first Sunday six besides my own family; on the second, nine; and on the third, about eighteen: and it is now, not only spread through the town, that I have preached, but, I believe, through this island. I find my disposition very averse to the practice of the Law, and, indeed, inclined to nothing but the care of souls. A false shame and the fear of man, which I have found troublesome for several years, was suddenly removed (I know not how), the day before I first expounded in the town." To Mr. Gilbert the poor negroes, in particular, listened with attention; and he lived to form about two hundred of them into a society, all of whom were convinced of sin, and many of them truly converted to God.

About the time of this gentleman's death, the Moravians sent missionaries to the West Indies, and a few of his scattered flock were taken under the care of the United Brethren. A considerable number of them were also kept together by two

female negroes, who prayed with them when they assembled, and preserved, as far as they were able, the forms of the society which had been established by their friend and benefactor.

Just twenty years after Mr. Gilbert had been in England, Mr. John Baxter, a shipwright, who was in his Majesty's service, removed from the Royal Docks, at Chatham, to English Harbour, in Antigua. He had been a local preacher in connexion with Mr. Wesley, in England; and, as soon as he arrived in that island, he took upon himself immediately, as far as his occupation would permit, the management of the society that had been already formed. He collected the scattered remains of Mr. Gilbert's labours: devoted his Sundays entirely to their instruction; and upon week days, for seven or eight years, with the greatest zeal and diligence, walked through the dews of the evening, when his work in the harbour was over, to give instruction to the slaves on the different plantations. Persevering in this course through much opposition, he at length was able to raise a society of, at least, one thousand negroes: and, by the contributions of these poor people, he succeeded in building a chapel for their accommodation, in Antigua. In the benevolent work of giving instruction to the slaves, Mr. Baxter, after some time, received considerable assistance from an English woman, who having an annuity charged upon an estate in the island, had found it necessary

to reside there. This lady opened her house for prayers every day, and set apart one evening every week for reading the Scriptures to all who were willing to attend for that purpose.

Whilst Mr. Baxter and this lady were endeavouring to render themselves as useful as possible, they received assistance in a manner as unexpected as it appears to have been providential. In the city of Waterford there was an old man, who, being past labour, was, with his wife, supported by the industry of two sons, whom he had brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The whole family were Methodists: and, at the close of the American war, they formed the resolution of emigrating to the United States. The young men would not go without their parents, but they succeeded in obtaining their consent to accompany them to a land which was then represented as "flowing with milk and honey." The poor lads, as they had no other means of paying their passage, indented themselves to the master of a ship, who was collecting white slaves for the market in Virginia. A married son and his wife, who only went on board to take leave of their parents, were also induced to join the party on the same terms. As soon as they had got out to sea, the savage captain quickly made them repent an enterprize that they had undertaken from their own inexperience and ignorance of the world. After a miserable voyage, in which they were

treated like slaves of the lowest cast, the ship was providentially driven to the West Indies, and put into Antigua, a mere floating wreck. When they had got ashore, the old man, hearing there were Methodists on the island, inquired for the preaching-house; and there he found real and active friends, who, as soon as they knew the circumstances of the case, immediately ransomed the whole family. The three brothers were provided with good situations; and the father, who had long been acquainted with Methodism, acted under the direction of Baxter, and they were both so successful that in the year 1786, they had nearly two thousand negroes united to their society.

About this time, Dr. Coke embarked upon his second voyage to America, accompanied by three missionaries, who were designed for Nova Scotia. But the westerly winds blew with such violence, from the American coast, that they were unable to reach the harbour of Halifax, and were obliged to steer for the West Indies. The captain of the vessel in which they sailed, being addicted to that kind of superstition which sometimes takes possession of seamen, began to think that the stormy weather and contrary winds were owing to the Doctor's prayers; and one day in the midst of a tempest, which had driven all the passengers to prayer for the preservation of the ship, he was observed to walk the deck in great agitation, muttering to himself, but so as to be distinctly heard,

"We have a Jonah on board! We have a Jonah on board!" In this way he continued for some time, till having wrought himself almost into a state of madness, he at length burst into the Doctor's cabin, and seizing his books and papers, tossed them into the sea. Then laying hold on the Doctor himself, who was a man of a diminutive stature, he swore that, if ever he made another prayer on board that ship, he would throw him overboard, after his papers. At length, however, they reached Antigua, on Christmas-day, after a voyage of imminent dangers and protracted sufferings, for the space of thirteen weeks. Dr. Coke, as soon as they landed, went in search of Mr. Baxter, and met him on his way to officiate at the chapel. It was with no small degree of astonishment and joy, that this unexpected arrival was hailed by the latter and his companions: and the Doctor relieved him of the duty he was about to discharge, by performing the service himself, and administering the Lord's Supper, after that was concluded. The appearance of the congregation upon this occasion gave him peculiar pleasure. The women were dressed in white linen gowns, petticoats, handkerchiefs, and caps: and the men also appeared equally clean, and in the whole congregation it would be difficult to find a spot of dirt.

During the short time that Dr. Coke remained there, there was a considerable stir in the capital

of this little island; and the congregations were so large every evening, composed of the ladies and gentlemen of the town, that the poor negroes, who had erected the chapel at their own expense, were obliged to stand without at the windows. This privation, however, they suffered, not only without the least complaint, but with joy and exultation, hoping that the white people who attended, might be profited by the preaching of the gospel. Mr. Warrener, one of the missionaries, remained in the island to assist Mr. Baxter, and under their ministry and that of their successors, much good was effected in Antigua. In fact, such was the influence that religion had over the minds of the slaves, that military law, which it had been always found necessary to enforce during the Christmas holidays, was now become a mere form. It was also allowed on all hands, that the religious negroes were the best servants in the island; that they were more faithful in their obedience without a whip, than the others how severely soever they might be punished: and Dr. Coke was informed, that, if five hundred a year would detain him in Antigua, it should be contributed freely for that purpose. "God be praised," says he, "five hundred thousand a year would be to me a feather, when opposed to my usefulness in the church of Christ.

While the Doctor and his companions remained in Antigua, they were treated with great hospi-

tality; and the company of merchants invited them to a dinner which was given to his late Majesty, then Prince William Henry. Invitations arrived for the preachers from St. Vincent's; and such appeared to be the demand for labourers, that Mr. Baxter gave up an income of four hundred pounds a year, currency, which he received from the government as store-keeper in English Harbour, that he might be able to devote himself wholly to the work of God among the negroes, though he knew that his dependence for a livelihood would in future be wholly on the bounty of Providence. To this privation, Mrs. Baxter, who was a Creole, readily submitted; and the Doctor, with Mr. Baxter and the two other missionaries, departed from Antigua, to visit the neighbouring islands of Dominica, St. Vincent's, Nevis, and St. Christopher's.

In St. Vincent's the planters were remarkably kind to them: and though the commanding officer would not permit them to preach in the barracks, the general prospect appeared so encouraging, that Mr. Clarke was stationed there, and Mr. Hammet at St. Christopher's. In Antigua the missionaries had received recommendatory letters to the island of St. Eustatius, which belonged to the Dutch West India Company. Here a slave named Harry, who had been a member of the Methodist Society in America, had commenced exhorting his fellow-slaves, and had been silenced by the gover-

nor, because they were so much affected at hearing him, that "many fell as if they were dead, and some remained in a state of stupor for several hours." The day after Harry had been ordered to be silent, Dr. Coke and his companions landed on the island. They soon found, however, that they were no longer in the enjoyment of that liberty which they experienced under the British government. They were commanded to be private in their devotions, till after they had prepared their Confession of Faith and credentials, and till the court had taken them into consideration, to know whether their religion ought to be tolerated or not. When this was done, the council expressed themselves satisfied with the Confession, and Dr. Coke was desired to preach before them. It was evident, however, that they would not permit the establishment of an English mission on the island: so the Doctor, after remaining a fortnight, and forming such as were willing to meet together into classes, departed for his American destination.

From this time a regular appointment of preachers was made at the annual Conference for the West Indies; and the prospect, upon the whole, appeared encouraging. In the year 1788, Dr. Coke sailed a third time for the western world, taking with him three missionaries intended for the Columbian islands. They sailed in the Hankey, and, during the passage, gained so far upon the

esteem of the crew, that when they took their leave of them at Barbadoes, several of the men were in tears, and the sailors bade them farewell with three hearty cheers as the boat dropped astern. As soon as they landed at Bridgetown, Mr. Pearce, one of the missionaries, was immediately recognized by a sergeant, who had been quartered at Kinsale; and they found that this man and some of his comrades had united together in a society, and were in the habit of exhorting the people in a warehouse which a friendly merchant had lent them for that purpose. It appeared also that this merchant had been a hearer of Dr. Coke's in America, where some of his negroes had been baptized by him. He therefore received the missionaries into his house with great cordiality; and they subsequently met much encouragement from the planters, and even from the governor himself.

Dr. Coke, having left Mr. Pearce upon the island, proceeded to visit St. Vincent's, where one of the missionaries was stationed to assist the former preacher; and Baxter and his wife took up their residence among the Caribs. In the course of his tour among the islands, the Doctor landed again on St. Eustatius. After his former departure from this place, poor Harry, the slave, thinking the governor intended no more in his prohibition than he had expressed, abstained from preaching to his fellow-slaves, which was all he was commanded to

do, but thought himself at perfect liberty to pray with them, which he accordingly did. However, he soon found himself mistaken: he was publicly whipped and imprisoned for no other offence than this, and then banished the island. An edict was also issued, declaring, "that if any white person should be found praying with others who were not of his family, he should be fined fifty pieces of eight for the first offence, a hundred for the second, and for the third offence he should be whipped, his goods confiscated, and himself banished the island. A free man of colour was to receive thirty-nine stripes for the first offence, and for the second to be flogged and banished; and a slave was to be flogged every time he was found offending." Such an edict was as full of impiety as it was of cruelty and injustice; and seemed strange coming from a Dutch governor, from whom, at least some outward respect for religion, might have been expected. "This, I think," says Dr. Coke, "is the first instance, known among mankind, of a persecution openly avowed against religion itself. The persecutions among the heathens were supported under the pretence that the Christians brought in strange gods; those among the Roman Catholics were under the pretext of the Protestants introducing heresies into the church; but this is openly and avowedly against *prayer*, the great key to every blessing."

It is surprising that, notwithstanding the rigour

with which this edict was enforced in St. Eustatius, the Doctor found above two hundred and fifty members in the little society which he had formerly formed in the island. He remained but one night there. An accident, however, happening to the sloop in which he and his companions were sailing for St. Christopher's, they were obliged to put back into St. Eustatius; and the Doctor, considering this a call from God to bear a public testimony for Christ before his departure, hired a room, that none of his friends might suffer by it, and after having publicly officiated, he gave notice that he intended to perform divine service there again on the following day. But the Dutchman's authority was not to be trifled with; he sent a message, the next morning, to the Doctor and two of his companions who were specified by name, requiring them to engage that they would not, publicly or privately, by day or by night, preach either to whites or blacks, during their stay in that island, on pain of prosecution, arbitrary punishment, and banishment. "We withdrew to consult," says he, "and after considering that we were favoured by providence with an open door, in other islands, for as many missionaries as we could spare, and that God was carrying on his blessed work, even in this island, by means of secret class-meetings: and that Divine Providence may, in future, redress these grievances by a change of the governor, or by the interference of the superior powers in Holland in

some other way, we gave for answer, that we would obey the government; and, having nothing more at present to do in that place of tyranny, oppression, and wrong, we returned to St. Kitt's, blessing God for a British constitution and a British government."

The prudence of an act, however, which was committed by Dr. Coke and his companions upon their departure from St. Eustatius may be justly questioned. A third missionary, named Brazier, happened to be in their company, of whom the governor had not heard, and therefore he had not taken any notice of him in his mandate. This preacher they left upon the island, thinking it no breach of their own engagement or of the governor's order, for him to remain with the society and give them all the assistance he could. But, as soon as the circumstance was discovered, he was commanded to leave it immediately; and, considering the disposition of the governor, this was acting with more temper than might have been expected. Brazier, accordingly removed, under the patronage of an influential man, to the little island of Saba, a dependency on St. Eustatius, containing about three thousand inhabitants, one thousand of whom were whites. A church had been formerly erected on the island, but was then unoccupied, as the people had been without a minister for seventeen years. They were delighted with the arrival of the missionary, and offered him the church, the

parsonage, and a sufficient maintenance, if he would consent to take up his residence among them. But, as itinerancy was a principle in Methodism, which, Dr. Coke said, could not be dispensed with, he would by no means consent to this arrangement. The governor of St. Eustatius, however, saved him the trouble of enforcing this matter: for, as soon as he heard where Brazier was, he compelled the government of Saba to dismiss him, and he was accordingly obliged to depart from that place immediately.

In the beginning of the year 1789, Dr. Coke visited the island of Jamaica. He was so well received in general here, by all classes of the people, that he says he never visited any place, either in England or America, where Methodism had not taken root, in which he received so many civilities as in Jamaica. He next pursued his course to America, and thence returned to England, greatly pleased with the prospect that, upon the whole, had been opened to the missionaries in the West Indies.

The system which had now been so much extended by the exertions and zealous activity of this enterprising minister of Christ, became, at length, by its increasing expenditure, a matter of serious concern to the connexion at home. Dr. Coke was therefore requested, by the conference, to make a tour through the united kingdom, in order to solicit contributions from the friends of religion in general,

to defray the expenses of the missions which had been established amongst the negroes in the West Indies. This duty he discharged, for the space of sixteen months, with his characteristic zeal and perseverance. He not only preached in every place, on behalf of the negroes, but he went himself from door to door, and made a personal application to such as were likely to contribute to this desirable object. An anecdote, related by Mr. Drew, in the Doctor's life, shows that he possessed the power of persuasion to a very considerable extent:—A captain in the navy, from whom he obtained a subscription, having called upon a gentleman who was acquainted with Dr. Coke, the same morning, said in the course of conversation, "Do you know any thing of a little fellow who calls himself Dr. Coke, and who is going about begging money for missionaries to be sent among the slaves?" "I know him well," said the gentleman. "He seems," rejoined the captain, "to be a heavenly-minded little devil; he coaxed me out of two guineas this morning."

Having obtained enough to meet the expenses of the missions, Dr. Coke made a third voyage to the West Indies, in the autumn of 1790. In Barbadoes, he found a chapel had been erected during his absence; but the preacher had sunk in the estimation of the people. The nickname of Hallelujah had been fixed upon the Methodists, and they had experienced much opposition from the inhabi-

tants of that island. In St. Vincent's, also, the French priests at Martinico had been able to excite the prejudices of the Caribs against Mr. Baxter and the English missionaries in general. They persuaded such of them as went there on business, that the Methodists were spies sent out by the king of England to explore their land; and, as soon as they should have done this sufficiently, they would return home, and then an army would be sent out to conquer their country. The disposition evinced by the Caribs towards Mr. Baxter, after they had received this information, was such as convinced him it would be imprudent to remain among them any longer; and accordingly he and Mrs. Baxter took their leave of these poor savages, praying that they might have another call, and that they might not reject it as they had done this. At Grenada, Dr. Coke and Mr. Baxter were received with great courtesy; and General Matthews, the governor, expressed a wish that missionaries should be sent thither, to instruct the negroes in the truths of the Christian religion. But the French language being that which was spoken by the greater part of the inhabitants, no extensive good could be done without missionaries who were able to preach in that tongue.

Dr. Coke's unrivalled zeal drove him forward from island to island, and he had the satisfaction to see that his labour was not altogether vain in any place that he visited. Even in St. Eustatius, not-

withstanding the edict which had been issued by the governor, the Methodists still continued their class-meetings, and there were no fewer than eight exhorters among them. A society had been formed in Dominica, in which were one hundred and fifty blacks: and Santa Cruz, with the other islands under the Danish government, was opened to the English missionaries, so that in comparison of the extent of the harvest, it might be justly said that the labourers were few. "Indispensable as religion is," says Dr. Southey, "to the well-being of every society, its salutary influences are more especially required in countries where the system of slavery is established. If the planters understood their own interest, they would see that the missionaries might be made their best friends: that, by their means, the evils of slavery might be mitigated; and that, in proportion as the slave was made a religious being, he became resigned to his lot and contented. But one sure effect of that abominable system is, that it demoralizes the masters as much as it brutalizes the slaves. Men whose lives are evil willingly disbelieve the gospel if they can; and, with the greater part of mankind, belief and disbelief depend upon volition far more than is generally understood. But, if they cannot succeed in this, they naturally hate those who preach zealously against their habitual vices."

There is no doubt but the opposition which the Methodists subsequently experienced in some of

the West Indian Islands, was raised against them partly because of that zeal which the society in England evinced for the abolition of slavery; and which was ultimately crowned with success. In Antigua, Mr. Baxter was assaulted by some drunken persons at the door of the chapel, who threatened to murder him, and created a considerable excitement in that island. In St. Vincent's, one night, about Christmas, 1790, a company of rioters broke into the chapel, which the missionaries had purchased and fitted up in Kingston: and, after doing what mischief they could upon the benches and other things, they seized on the Bible, carried it to the place of public execution, and hung it in form upon the gallows, where it was found the next morning. The magistrates of the island, very properly, offered a reward of a hundred pounds, for the discovery of any of the perpetrators of this flagitious act; and, had they been discovered no doubt they would have suffered the punishment which such a piece of audacious villainy justly deserved. In Jamaica, notwithstanding Dr. Coke had been courteously received at first, the spirit of persecution raged against those who succeeded him, with such fury, that the lives of many pious persons were saved from the violence of the mob, almost by miracle. They even reported that Dr. Coke had been tried in England, for horse-stealing, and had fled the country, in order to escape from justice. At Spanish Town and at

Kingston, he was grossly insulted by a set of profligate young men; but, when he expressed his determination, if justice should be refused him in Jamaica, to seek for it at home, where he was sure to succeed, the effect of this declaration had a salutary influence upon the disposition of the rioters.

Amidst all the persecution, however, and opposition which the Methodists were obliged to encounter in the West Indies, their labours continued to be crowned with incredible success: and, at the time of Mr. Wesley's death, there were no less than fourteen preachers stationed there, and about six thousand members in the society, two-thirds of whom were negroes. Since that period, such has been the progress of Methodism in that Archipelago, that seventy-eight missionaries are now stationed in the different islands, besides several places that have requested one to be sent, and whose claims have been admitted by the British conference. By the return made for 1838, it appears that the West Indian societies contain no less than 40,164 members.

It would not comport with the design of this volume, to enter into a particular detail of the history of Methodism in every department of its widely extended missions. Suffice it to say, that no people have been more zealous, and, at the same time, more extensive in missionary exertions than the Methodists have been. They have carried

the gospel to the most distant nations in the east; they have visited Africa, south and west: have missions established in the South Sea islands: and wherever British influence has opened a door for them, they have entered the field of labour with zeal and energy, and have been the means of turning many from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the service of the living God. Had the entire body been faithful to the principles upon which their founder set out, and maintained their connexion with the national church, how much additional good might have been effected by their means; but, as it is, it would be wrong to withhold from them that tribute of praise which is justly due to their unwearied exertions and extensive usefulness.

CHAPTER XI.

METHODISM DURING MR. WESLEY'S LIFE.

THAT a religious society may be formed in a church, for the purpose of prayer and mutual edification, distinct from that fellowship which is implied in ordinary church communion, without partaking of the nature of schism, is a matter so obvious to reason and common sense, that we suppose it will not be called in question by any reasonable man. Such were the societies described by Dr. Woodward, and such were the primitive Methodist societies as they were first intended by their venerable founder. They were societies formed in the Church of England, but so liberally constituted that they were open to all serious persons of every religious denomination in England. Their doctrines did not differ from those of the church: and their discipline was merely that of a voluntary society, arising out of the necessity of the case, and not intended for any sectarian purpose, or to be a substitute for any order of ecclesiastical government whatever.

The popular principle upon which the Methodist society was formed, and the propriety of admitting persons of different religious persuasions into it, was once debated in conference; and, no doubt, was brought forward by those who wished the Methodists to be a distinct and independent people. Mr. Wesley listened patiently to the discussion, and concluded it by saying, "I have no more right to object to a man for holding a different opinion from me, than I have to differ with him because he wears a wig and I wear my own hair; but, if he takes his wig off, and begins to shake the powder about my eyes, I shall consider it my duty to get quit of him as soon as possible." Upon this broad and liberal principle, the founder of Methodism and his assistants acted from the commencement. They arranged the economy of the societies which they had formed, and the times of their meeting, so as not to interfere with the public worship in the established church; and disclaimed any design of erecting the connexion into an independent sect, by adopting the outward badges of a distinct and separate portion of the Christian church.

The power which Mr. Wesley possessed and exercised over both preachers and people in the Methodist body was very extensive; and by this authority, which he maintained to the end of his long life, he was able to curb that separating spirit which sometimes appeared in different parts of the connexion. He legislated for the society he had

raised, and exercised an absolute supremacy over his people, without any appeal from his decision. By his sole authority he received preachers to labour under his direction, appointed them their stations, or dismissed them whenever he thought them unworthy of their office. The inferior officers, such as local preachers, leaders, and stewards, were equally subject to his appointment and authority. This power, which, considered in itself, seems scarcely justifiable upon the principles of Protestantism, or reconcileable with the liberty which is enjoyed in all voluntary societies, gave considerable offence to some of the preachers. Arguing from their call to the ministry, and the success of their labours, they pleaded for deciding every matter belonging to the Methodist body, by a simple majority in conference; and, it is probable, they urged many plausible arguments in favour of their possessing the power which they claimed; but, as this would have reduced their founder to a level with themselves, he wisely resolved to retain the authority which he possessed, as a talent given him by God, and for the exercise of which he was accountable to the Great Head of the church. "The power I have," says he, "I never sought: it was the undesired, unexpected result of the work God was pleased to work by me. I have a thousand times sought to devolve it on others; but, as yet, I cannot,—I therefore suffer it, till I can find any to ease me of my burden."

The first conference which Mr. Wesley held was in the year 1744, and from that period he was accustomed to assemble annually such of the preachers as he wished to confer with; but during his life this meeting possessed no legislative authority in the connexion. In successive "conversations," at first, the great subject of deliberation was, not so much the discipline of the society, as the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, and their effect upon the experience and practice of religious professors. But, after the body had acquired greater maturity, these doctrinal discussions became less frequent; a standard and a test being ultimately established in a select number of Mr. Wesley's doctrinal sermons, and in his Notes on the New Testament. As declining years, however, forewarned him that the government of the Methodist body must soon pass into other hands, he looked forward to the future with no ordinary degree of anxiety. Having, therefore, consulted some of the most eminent lawyers on the subject, as hitherto all the chapels, houses, and property of the society had been entirely in his hands, he found that, to prevent the alienation of them from the purposes for which they were intended, it was necessary that the conference, on whom they were settled after his death, should be defined by some legal act. Accordingly on the 28th of February, 1784, he executed what has been called the "Deed of Declaration," incorporating one hundred of the

preachers as his representatives after his death; and this instrument, which was intended to legalize the conference, was enrolled in his Majesty's High Court of Chancery, conferring upon the centumvirate all that legal power and responsibility which then rested with himself, as well as regulating the time and circumstances of their annual session.

Whatever may be thought of the utility of this Deed, or the selection of the preachers who were to be legally styled the conference, there can be no doubt of the purity of Mr Wesley's intentions in the whole affair. "Without some authentic deed," says he, "fixing the meaning of the term, the moment I died the conference had been nothing. Therefore, any of the proprietors of the land on which our preaching-houses were built, might have seized them for their own use, and there would have been none to hinder them, for the conference would have been nobody—a mere empty name." It is to be observed that the design of this deed was to secure the chapels and property of the society; but it conveyed no power to the conference, with regard either to legislative or to executive discipline in the connexion, which they would not have equally possessed had no such deed ever existed. However, it gave great offence to some of the preachers whose names were not inserted in it, and four of them were so much displeased with this omission, that they forthwith desisted from travelling. Perhaps some of the

preachers omitted were, in every respect, more eligible than some to whom the preference was given; but, as Mr. Wesley himself declared, he acted from the best of his judgment, and that he would have inserted the names of those preachers who reflected on his choice, if he had had so good an opinion of them as they had of themselves.

Anterior to the adoption of this measure, Mr. Wesley had pitched upon Mr. Fletcher as his successor: and, had the latter accepted of that office, it is possible that no such deed would have been thought of at the time. However, Mr. Fletcher, though a much younger man than Mr. Wesley, was summoned to his reward before him. He had, some years previous to his death, left England, to try the effect of his native air, carrying with him all the symptoms of an advanced stage of consumption; but, to eating plentifully of cherries and grapes, he thought, under God, he might in a good measure ascribe his recovery. His friends wished him to remain among them at Nyon.—"They urge," says he, "my being born here: and I reply, that I was born again in England, and therefore that is, of course, the country which to me is the dearer of the two." It was after his return to England that he married Miss Bosanquet, a woman perfectly suited to him in age, temper, piety, and talents. His account of himself, after this period, is characteristic, and exhibits the views which he entertained, as well as the thoughts which

exercised his mind most, in the latter part of his life. "I keep," says he, "in my sentry box, till Providence remove me: my situation is quite suited to my little strength. I may do as much or as little as I please, according to my weakness; and I have an advantage, which I can have no where else in such a degree; my little field of action is just at my door, so that, if I happen to overdo myself, I have but a step from my pulpit to my bed, and from my bed to my grave. If I had a body full of vigour, and a purse full of money, I should like well enough to travel about as Mr. Wesley does; but, as Providence does not call me to it, I readily submit;—the snail does best in its shell."

In 1785, this excellent and holy man was called to his reward, in the fifty-sixth year of his age. The circumstances of his death, as well as of his life, were peculiar, and deserve to be noticed in this place. A cold which he caught had induced a considerable degree of fever; but, notwithstanding his illness, he could not be dissuaded from officiating at church, when Sunday arrived. He was convinced, he said, that it was the will of the Lord he should go; and he assured Mrs. Fletcher and several of his friends, that he knew God would strengthen him and enable him to go through the duties of the day. But, after he had commenced the service, a deathly paleness appeared in his countenance, his voice failed him, and a faintness

came upon him, so that he was unable to stand. The people were alarmed, and greatly affected; and his wife, making her way through the congregation, entreated him not to proceed in a duty which appeared to be beyond his ability. The windows, however, being opened, he recovered his strength, went through the service, and preached with great earnestness, notwithstanding the hand of death was visibly upon him. When the sermon was ended, he went to the communion-table, saying, "I am going to throw myself under the wings of the cherubim, before the Mercy-seat!" "Here," says Mrs. Fletcher, "the same distressing scene was renewed, with additional solemnity.—The people were deeply affected while they beheld him offering up the last languid remains of a life that had been lavishly spent in their service.—Groans and tears were on every side. In going through this part of his duty, he was exhausted again and again; but his spiritual vigour triumphed over his bodily weakness. After several times sinking on the sacramental table, he still resumed his sacred work, and cheerfully distributed, with his dying hand, the love-memorials of his dying Lord. In the course of this concluding office, which he performed by means of the most astonishing exertions, he gave out several verses of hymns, and delivered many affectionate exhortations to his people, calling upon them, at intervals, to celebrate the mercy of God in short songs of adoration and

praise. And now, having struggled through a service of near four hours' continuance, he was supported, with blessings in his mouth, from the altar to his chamber, where he lay for some time in a swoon, and from whence he never walked into the world again."

Mr. Fletcher died the following Sunday. A hymn of supplication was sung for his recovery, in the church; and one who was present informs us that it is impossible to convey an idea of the burst of sorrow that accompanied it. Mrs. Fletcher says, "I besought the Lord, if it were his good pleasure, to spare him to me a little longer. But my prayers seemed to have no wings; and I could not help mingling continually therewith—Lord, give me perfect resignation!" The love which his parishioners bore to this pious and amiable pastor, was evinced by the effect which his illness produced upon every mind and every countenance. "The whole village." says Mr. Gilpin, "wore an air of consternation and sadness. Hasty messengers were passing to and fro, with anxious inquiries and confused reports; and the members of every family sate together in silence that day, awaiting with trembling expectation the issue of every hour." The poor people, who had come from a distance, and who had been usually entertained in his house, lingered about the place, after the evening service, and expressed an earnest desire to see the man who had instructed them in

those truths which were then their consolation and their hope. For this purpose, the door of his chamber was set open; directly opposite to which he was sitting upright in his bed, with the curtains undrawn; and they passed along the gallery one by one, pausing as they went by the door, to look upon him for the last time. Shortly after this, his spirit returned to God that gave it, and he died in perfect peace, and in the fulness of faith and hope, without a struggle or a groan. "Such," says Dr. Southey, "was the death of Jean Guillaume de La Flechere, or, as he may more properly be designated in this his adopted country, Fletcher of Madeley, a man of whom Methodism may well be proud as the most able of its defenders; and whom the Church of England may hold in honourable remembrance, as one of the most pious and excellent of her sons."

It is no wonder that Mr. Wesley wished such a man to succeed him in the government of the Methodist body, since all his talents, as well as his piety, fitted him so well for that arduous and important station. "I was intimately acquainted with him," says he, "for above thirty years. I conversed with him, morning, noon, and night, without the least reserve, during a journey of many hundred miles: and, in all that time, I never heard him speak an improper word, nor saw him do an improper action. Many exemplary men have I known, holy in heart and life, within fourscore

years, but one equal to him I have not known: one so inwardly and outwardly devoted to God,—so unblameable a character, in every respect, I have not found, either in Europe or America; nor do I expect to find another such on this side of eternity."

Had Mr. Fletcher outlived Mr. Wesley, and consented that the government of the connexion should devolve upon him, circumstances would soon have rendered it impossible for him to continue to carry it on for any considerable length of time. The body of lay-preachers were increasing every year in importance and respectability: some of them were men of good natural abilities, and who had frequently evinced a refractory disposition towards Mr. Wesley himself: it is not likely, therefore, that they would submit to be governed by one, how respectable and pious soever he might be, who had not that kind of natural claim upon their submission, which they properly associated with the name of their venerated founder. Besides, at a very early period, many of them desired that a system of greater independence might be established amongst them: and as it was very difficult for men placed in their circumstances, to divest themselves of every idea of the clerical character, they thought that their connexion with the church, and their dependence upon it for the Christian sacraments, detracted from their official importance and professional respectability. In-

fluenced by these views, and, perhaps, imagining that the adoption of their favourite measures would be productive of great good, they were at first desirous that the preachers in general, or, at least, a part of them, should have some kind of ordination: but both Mr. Wesley and his brother opposed this, as inconsistent with all their professions from the beginning, as well as with the design of their being united together as a religious society.

But the spirit that some of the preachers had raised, was not to be allayed even by the cogent reasons and earnest exhortations of Mr. Wesley himself. Some of the lay-preachers had used every means in their power to excite a spirit of hostility to the Established Church in the minds of the people committed to their care; and hence to raise a clamour for the change which they themselves were so anxious to accomplish. "We may observe," says Dr. Whitehead, "that this dissatisfaction originated with a few preachers, and from them spread like a contagious disease to the people: This was the case at first, and has always been the case since, wherever the people have desired any alteration in the original constitution of the Methodist Societies. Their method of proceeding to effect their purpose is rather curious, and shows to what means men will sometimes resort, to support a particular cause. For as soon as these preachers had, by various methods, influenced a

few persons in any society to desire to receive the Lord's Supper from them, they pleaded this circumstance as a reason why the innovation should take place. As a vast majority in these societies were members of the Church of England, so the forming of the Methodists into a separate party, was called a separating from the church; though it evidently implied a change in their relative situation to all denominations of dissenters as much as to the church."

The evil consequences of this spirit of disaffection to that system which had been established amongst the primitive Methodists, were soon evinced by the tendency to disunion which it produced in different parts of the connexion. A division had taken place in Leeds, and Mr. Charles Wesley was appointed to visit those places that were infected with the principles of separation, a duty which he undertook under the most painful exercises of mind. He passed, in this visitation, through Gloucestershire, Staffordshire, and Nottingham, and preached in several of the churches as he went along. When he arrived at Leeds he met with his old friend Mr. Whitefield, of whom he bears the following honourable testimony:— "I rejoiced to hear of the great good Mr. Whitefield has done in our societies. He preached as universally as my brother. He warned them everywhere against apostacy, and insisted on the necessity of holiness after justification. He beat down

the separating spirit, highly commending the prayers and services of our church; charged our people to meet their bands and classes constantly, and never to leave the Methodists or God would leave them. In a word, he did his utmost to strengthen our hands; and he deserves the thanks of all the churches for his abundant labour of love."

Mr. Charles Wesley's visit to Leeds was attended with a good effect. He was assisted at a watch-night there by Mr. Whitefield and Mr. Grimshaw, vicar of Haworth, a clergyman who had devoted all the powers of his body and soul to the propagation of primitive Methodism in the part of the country in which he resided. Many of the society in Leeds, who were on the point of being carried away by the mischievous spirit which some of the preachers had raised, were confirmed in their former principles, and the Methodists of Leeds declared their unanimous resolution to abide in the church and adhere to those principles that had first united them together. In reference to this concordance of feeling, Mr. Charles Wesley, in a letter which he wrote to that society before he left Yorkshire, makes use of these remarkable words:—"I thank God, on your behalf, for the grace which is given unto you, by which ye stand fast in one mind and in one spirit. My Master, I am persuaded, sent me to you at this time to confirm your souls in the present truth—in your calling in the old

paths of gospel ordinances. * * * I knew, beforehand, that the *Sanballats* and *Tobiahs* would be grieved when they heard there was a man come to seek the good of the Church of England. I expected they would pervert my words, as if I should say, *the church could save you.* So, indeed, you and I thought, till I and my brethren taught you better, and sent you in and through all the means to Jesus Christ. But let not their slanders move you. Continue in the old ship. Jesus hath a favour for our church, and is wonderfully visiting and reviving his work in her. It shall be shortly said, *Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her.* Blessed be God, you see your calling. Let nothing hinder you from going constantly to church and sacrament."

Nor was Mr. Charles Wesley less successful in many other places in his endeavours to promote, amongst the members of the society, a steady adherence to those principles upon which they were first united in a religious social compact. From Manchester, he observes, in a letter to Mr. Grimshaw:—"I could not leave this shattered society as soon as I proposed. They have not had fair play from our treacherous sons in the gospel, but have been scattered by them as sheep upon the mountains. I have once more persuaded them to go to church and sacrament, and stay to carry

them thither the next Lord's-day. Nothing but grace can keep our children, after our departure, from running into a thousand sects,—a thousand errors."

From the time of this visitation the feelings of the lay-preachers were strongly excited against Mr. Charles Wesley, and even to the present day, the observations that he made, as the result of his inquiries, are not forgiven by their successors. He wished some test of undeviating attachment to the church to be drawn up for the signature of every person who was received as an itinerant preacher: and had he been consulted more in the latter stages of Mr. John Wesley's life, the barriers raised against innovation would have been much more secure than those which were erected by the Deed of Declaration.

The complaints of the discontented party, however, did not entirely subside; and a Mr. Norton, speaking the sentiments of the rest, charged Mr. Wesley with inconsistency, in tolerating the ministry of laymen in preaching the gospel, and not in the duty of administering the sacraments. He also accused him of evincing a spirit of persecution in denying to his brethren the liberty of acting, as well as of thinking, according to their own conscience. In reply to this charge, Mr. Wesley declared that he acted on the same principle in tolerating the one, and in prohibiting the other. "My principle," said he, "is this: I sub-

mit to every ordinance of man wherever I do not conceive there is an absolute necessity for acting contrary to it. Consistently with this, I do tolerate lay-preaching, because I conceive there is an absolute necessity for it, inasmuch as if we had it not, thousands of souls would perish; yet I do not tolerate lay-administering, because I do not conceive there is any such necessity for it." Upon the second part of the charge he observes: "Some of our preachers, who are not ordained, think it quite right to administer the Lord's Supper, and believe it would do much good. I think it quite wrong, and believe it would do much hurt. Hereupon, I say, I have no right over your conscience, nor you over mine: therefore, both you and I must follow our own conscience. I verily believe it is a sin, which, consequently, I dare not tolerate; and herein I follow mine. Yet this is no persecution, were I to separate from our society those who practise what I believe is contrary to the word, and destructive of the work of God."

From this reply to Mr. Norton, it is obvious, Mr. Wesley's own private opinion was, that separation from the church, and the erection of an altar in opposition to her's, were in themselves manifestly unlawful: but in his "Reasons against Separation," he takes up the subject only on the ground of expediency. There was, however, a cogent reason for this, and it was by no means reducing the question, as Mr. Watson has asserted, to "a

mere matter of expediency." It has been observed by some, that, at the time of the division between the two parties of Methodists in this country, those who adhered to the original system, never pleaded the unlawfulness of separation, but that all their arguments were wholly grounded upon the inexpediency of the thing. However, the inference drawn from this circumstance, namely, that none of the Methodists believed such a separation to be unlawful, was without any sufficient premises. The constitution of a Methodist Society, as such, ought to be taken into account, and then the reason of such a line of argument would be obvious. A large proportion of the persons composing it were zealous members of the Established Church; and, were they to express their own private and unbiassed sentiments, no doubt the greater part of them would have no hesitation in declaring that they believed a separation from her communion to be unlawful. But in the province of Ulster, the Methodist Society in several places, was composed principally of Presbyterians; and, in Cork and elsewhere, some of the Baptists were zealous and efficient members. The views therefore of the aggregate body were to be met as far as circumstances would permit. Some believed separation unlawful: some, that, if even the lawfulness of it were doubtful, it was plainly inexpedient; and some grounded their objection on inexpediency alone. It appears then that the inexpediency of

the measure was the common ground on which all these different parties met, and, as the arguments arising out of this, were unobjectionable to any of them, or those in which they all concurred, they alone were employed, especially as they were found sufficient to reply to all those that were urged by the advocates of the change. It is plain, therefore, it was on this principle that Mr. Wesley drew up his "Reasons against Separation from the Church:" though, from those quotations which we have given above, we learn his opinion as an individual respecting the lawfulness of the measure in question.

In the "Larger Minutes," published in the year 1770, the founder of Methodism spoke very copiously upon this subject; and, if there ever was sincerity in any man, we have a right to give him credit for it, when he endeavoured to inculcate upon both preachers and people, the importance of a steady adherence to the establishment of the country. In answer to the question, "How should an assistant be qualified for his work?" he observes, "By walking closely with God, and having his work greatly at heart: by understanding and loving the Church of England, and resolving not to separate from it; let this be well observed. I fear when the Methodists leave the church, God will leave them." It is again asked, "Are we not, unawares, by little and little sliding into a separation from the church? O, use every means to

prevent this! 1. Exhort all our people to keep close to the church and sacrament. 2. Warn them all against niceness in hearing—a prevailing evil! 3. Warn them also against despising the prayers of the church. 4. Against calling our society the church. 5. Against calling our preachers ministers, our houses meeting-houses—call them plain preaching-houses, or chapels. 6. Do not license them as Dissenters; do not license yourself till you are constrained; and then, not as a Dissenter, but as a Methodist." The question is then asked, "But are we not Dissenters?" To which this answer is given:—"No. Although we call sinners to repentance in all places of God's dominion: and although we frequently use extemporary prayer, and unite together in a religious society; yet we are not Dissenters in the only sense which our law acknowledges, namely, those who renounce the service of the church. We do not: we dare not separate from it. We are not Seceders, nor do we bear any resemblance to them. We set out upon quite opposite principles. The Seceders laid the very foundation of their work in judging and condemning others. We laid the foundation of our work in judging and condemning ourselves. They begin every where with showing their hearers how fallen the church and ministers are. We begin every where with showing our hearers how fallen they are themselves. What they do in America, or what their Minutes say, is nothing to us. We

will keep in the good old way. And never let us make light of going to church, either in word or deed. Remember Mr. Hook, a very eminent and zealous Papist. When I asked him, 'Sir, what do you do for public worship here, when you have no Romish service?' He answered, 'Sir, I am so fully convinced it is the duty of every man to worship God in public, that I go to church every Sunday. If I cannot have such worship as I should, I will have such worship as I can.' But some may say, 'Our own service is public worship.' Yes; but not such as supersedes the church service: it pre-supposes public prayer, like the sermons at the University. If it were designed to be instead of the church service, it would be essentially defective. For it seldom has the four grand parts of public prayer, deprecation, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving. If the people put our's in the room of the church service, we hurt them that stay with us, and ruin them that leave us. For then they will go no where, but lounge the Sabbath away, without any public worship at all. 'Is it not our duty to separate from the church, considering both the wickedness of the clergy and the people?' No: because both the priests and the people were full as wicked in the Jewish Church; and yet it was not the duty of the holy Israelites to separate from them. Neither did our Lord command his disciples to separate from them: he rather commanded the contrary. Hence it is clear

that could not be the meaning of St. Paul's words, 'Come out from among them and be ye separate.'" Reference was then made to Mr. Wesley's "Reasons against a Separation," which had been published about twenty years before; but with these, no doubt, the reader is sufficiently acquainted, so that it is unnecessary to insert them in this place.

These testimonies are sufficient to show that, up to a very advanced period of life, Mr. Wesley uniformly strove to preserve the connexion he had formed in its native simplicity, as a religious society, and to prevent, as far as possible, any measure that would have a tendency to separate its members from the communion of the Established Church. But if farther proof were necessary to show his views of the relative position which Methodism should occupy, it was given by him in the most decided manner in which he had ever expressed himself, in a sermon preached in Cork, during the last visit which he paid to this country. It appears, that after having arrived in Dublin, in the year 1789, he passed through different parts of the country, and, at length, reached the city of Cork, where he found the Society much distracted by some individuals who wished to have the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper administered by their own preachers, and thereby to effect a separation from the Established Church, as well as from every other denomination of Protestant Dissenters. As this was a subject, the agitation of which he always deprecated, he was

resolved to leave his dying testimony with the discontented party; and, accordingly, on the 4th of May, in that year, he preached his sermon on the office and character of a Methodist preacher. In this discourse, which was published in the Arminian Magazine a short time after, under his direction, for the benefit of all his societies in England and Ireland, he depicts the character of primitive Methodism, and points out the office which Methodist preachers should fill as religious teachers, and the terms upon which they were first called out to labour in conjunction with himself and his brother. "We received them," says he, "wholly and solely to preach; not to administer sacraments. *And those who imagine these offices to be inseparably joined, are totally ignorant of the constitution of the whole Jewish as well as Christian Church.* Neither the Romish, the English, nor the Presbyterian Churches, ever accounted them so.

This sermon, which was preached about a year and ten months before Mr. Wesley's death, is decisive evidence that he uniformly opposed the principle upon which the preachers of England, and subsequently a large body of the Irish preachers, acted; and, whatever may be thought of the correctness of his views, no reasonable man can deny that he left his dying testimony in favour of that system of primitive Methodism, to which so large a proportion of the Irish connexion were afterwards found so pertinaciously to adhere.

CHAPTER XII.

CHANGES IN METHODISM.

On the 29th of March, 1788, Mr. Charles Wesley died, in the eightieth year of his age. "I visited him," says Dr. Whitehead, "several times in his last sickness; and his body was indeed reduced to the most extreme state of weakness. He possessed that state of mind which he had been always pleased to see in others,—unaffected humility, and holy resignation to the will of God. He had no transports of joy, but solid hope and unshaken confidence in Christ, which kept his mind in perfect peace. * * * The Methodists are greatly indebted to Charles Wesley for his unwearied labours and great usefulness at the first formation of the Societies, when every step was attended with difficulty and danger. And being dead he yet speaketh by his numerous and excellent hymns, written for the use of the societies, which still continue to be the means of daily edification and comfort to thousands"

Notwithstanding Mr. Charles Wesley had at-

tained to such an advanced period in life, he was a man of a delicate constitution. He had always entertained some dread of the act of dying; and his prayer was, that God would grant him patience and an easy death. In this, his prayer was remarkably answered. "A calmer frame of mind, and an easier passage, could not have been granted him; the powers of life were fairly worn out, and, without any disease, he fell asleep. By his own desire he was buried, not in his brother's burying ground, because it was not consecrated, but in the church-yard of Mary-le-bone, the parish in which he resided: and his pall was supported by eight clergymen of the Church of England."

Mr. John Wesley had been favoured with a constitution that was naturally good, and by cheerfulness, temperance, and activity, his life was protracted, under the blessing of Heaven, to a good old age. In the prime of life he had said, "I propose to be busy as long as I live, if my health is so long indulged to me:" and, perhaps, no resolution was more punctually observed than this, to the very latest period of his mortal existence. He lived to preach at Kingswood under the shade of trees which he had planted himself; and he outlived the lease of the Foundery, the place which had been the nursery of that system which now extended itself to both hemispheres. His anxiety that the Methodists throughout the world should consider themselves as one united body,

was manifested by the last letter which he wrote to America, dated February 1, 1791. "See," said he, "that you never give place to one thought of separating from your brethren in Europe. Lose no opportunity of declaring to all men, that the Methodists are one people in all the world, and that it is their full determination so to continue." He seemed also to have a presentiment that his hour was almost come. "Those that desire to write," said he, "or say any thing to me, have no time to lose; for *time has shaken me by the hand, and death is not far behind.*"

On his return, after having preached at Lambeth, on February 17th, he felt much indisposed; and said, that he thought he had caught a cold. The following day, however, he read and wrote as usual; and, in the evening, preached at Chelsea, though with considerable difficulty, having a high degree of fever upon him. For some days he struggled against his complaint, and continued to preach till the Wednesday following, when he delivered his last sermon, upon, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." From that time he daily became weaker and more lethargic, and on the 2nd of March, a few minutes before ten, while several of his friends were kneeling around his bed, without a lingering groan, his spirit returned to God who gave it, in the *eighty-eighth* year of his age, and the *sixty-fifth* of his ministry.

His corpse, at the desire of some of his friends, was placed in the New Chapel, and remained there the day before his interment, dressed in his clerical habit, with gown, cassock, and band; the old clerical cap on his head, a bible in one hand, and a white handkerchief in the other. His face had a heavenly smile upon it, and a beauty which was admired by all that saw it. The intention of his friends, as Dr. Whitehead had consented to preach his funeral sermon, was to place his corpse in an elevated situation before the pulpit, during the service: but from the crowds which assembled to see the body when lying in the chapel, a tumult was apprehended, if this plan should be adopted. It was therefore judged prudent to hasten the funeral, and to bury him between five and six in the morning. Notwithstanding this early hour, intelligence having gone abroad, a considerable number of persons attended: and the Rev. Mr. Richardson, who now lies with him in the same vault, read the funeral service in a manner that made it peculiarly affecting. Having been one of his preachers for almost thirty years, his own feelings were considerably excited upon the occasion: and, when he came to that part of the service, which says, "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God to take unto himself the soul of our dear *brother*, his voice changed, and he substituted the word *father*, with such a tender emphasis, that

the congregation, who were already shedding silent tears, burst at once into loud weeping.

It would be superfluous in this place to attempt a sketch of the character of this excellent, laborious, and extensively useful minister of Christ. However, from the high esteem in which we hold the character and judgment of the late Alexander Knox, Esq., not only as an orthodox churchman, but as a gentleman of no ordinary powers of discrimination, we cannot refrain from inserting what he has said upon that subject. "Very lately," says he, "I had an opportunity, for some days together, of observing Mr. Wesley with attention. I endeavoured to consider him, not so much with the eye of a friend, as with the impartiality of a philosopher; and I must declare, every hour I spent in his company afforded me fresh reasons for esteem and veneration. So fine an old man I never saw. The happiness of his mind beamed forth in his countenance. Every look showed how fully he enjoyed 'the gay remembrance of a life well spent:' and wherever he went, he diffused a portion of his own felicity. Easy and affable in his demeanour, he accommodated himself to every sort of company, and showed how happily the most finished courtesy may be blended with the most perfect piety. In his conversation, we might be at a loss whether to admire most, his fine classical taste, his extensive knowledge of men and things,

or his overflowing goodness of heart. While the grave and serious were charmed with his wisdom, his sportive sallies of innocent mirth delighted even the young and thoughtless; and both saw, in his uninterrupted cheerfulness, the excellency of true religion. No cynical remarks on the levity of youth embittered his discourse; no applausive retrospect to past times marked his present discontent. In him even old age appeared delightful, like an evening without a cloud; and it was impossible to observe him without wishing fervently, 'May my latter end be like his!'"

It may not be uninteresting to the reader to add to this character of Mr. Wesley, an anecdote related by Mr. Knox of that great and good man, Mr. Howard, especially as it is connected with the subject of which we are treating in this place. "Mr. Howard," says he, "in the course of his tour through Ireland, in the year 1787, spent a few days in Londonderry. I earnestly wished to see him; but bad health confined me to the house, and I thought I could not be gratified. Such were my thoughts, when I was told a gentleman had called to see me. It was Mr. Howard! I was most delightfully surprised. I acknowledge it as one of the happiest moments of my life. He came to see me, because he understood I was Mr. Wesley's friend. He began immediately to speak of him. He told me he had seen him shortly before, in Dublin; that he had spent some hours

with him, and was greatly edified by his conversation. 'I was,' said he, 'encouraged by him to go on vigorously with my own designs. I saw in him how much a single man might achieve by zeal and perseverance. And I thought, why may not I do as much in my way, as Mr. Wesley has done in his, if I am only as assiduous and persevering. And I determined I would pursue my work with more alacrity than ever.' I cannot quit this subject," continues Mr. Knox, "without observing that, excepting Mr. Wesley, no man ever gave me a more perfect idea of angelic goodness than Mr. Howard. His whole conversation exhibited a most interesting tissue of exalted piety, meek simplicity, and glowing charity. His striking adieu I never shall forget. 'Farewell, Sir,' said he; 'when we meet again, may it be in heaven, or farther on our way to it!' Precious man! May your prayer be answered; *Cum tua sit anima mea.*"

From the commencement of Methodism Mr. Wesley had been a centre of union to the connexion, and from what we have already stated, it is obvious, that the form of government under which it had existed, must now be changed from one that was purely monarchical, to that of an oligarchy. Many years before his death Mr. Charles Wesley had been hurt by the concessions of his brother in favour of some discontented lay-preachers, who had evinced a dislike to him and some other clergy-

men, because, by Mr. Wesley's appointment, they excluded them from the pulpit in the City Road chapel, on Sundays, by officiating there themselves. "I am sorry," said he, in a letter, "you yielded to the lay-preachers: I think them in the greatest danger through pride. They affect to believe that I act as a clergyman in opposition to them. If there was no man above them, what would become of them? how would they tear one another in pieces? Convince them, if you can, that they want a clergyman over them to keep them and the flock together. But rather persuade them, if you can, to be the least, not the greatest, and then all will be right again. You have no alternative but to conquer that spirit, or be conquered by it.—The preachers do not love the Church of England. What must be the consequence when we are gone? A separation is inevitable. Do you not wish to keep as many good people in the church as you can? Something might be done to save the remainder, if you had resolution and would stand by me, as firmly as I will by you."

But notwithstanding there existed a difference of opinion upon some points, between the two brothers, in the latter part of their lives, it produced no diminution of love and fraternal affection between them. Mr. John Wesley, notwithstanding he has been charged with ambition and the love of power, was not more jealous of his own

authority, than his brother Charles was solicitous that he should preserve it unimpaired to the end of his life. "Keep it while you live," said he, "and after your death, *detur digniori*, or rather, *dignioribus*." Mr. Wesley, however, having executed the Deed of Declaration, vesting in the select centumvirate his power over the chapels and the property of the Connexion, some of the preachers became apprehensive that they would, after his death, assume that plenitude of power over their brethren which their founder himself possessed; and to prevent this, as well as to remove every apprehension of the kind, he wrote the following letter, which he deposited in the hands of Mr. Joseph Bradford, to be by him presented to the conference at their first meeting after his decease:—

"*Chester, April* 7, 1785.

"TO THE METHODIST CONFERENCE.

"My dear Brethren,

"Some of our travelling preachers have expressed a fear that after my decease you would exclude them either from preaching in connexion with you, or from some other privileges which they now enjoy. I know no other way to prevent any such inconvenience than to leave these, my last words, with you.—I beseech you by the mercies of God, that you never avail yourselves of the Deed of Declaration, to assume any superiority over your brethren: but let all things go on among those itinerants, who choose to remain together, exactly in the same manner as when I was with

you, so far as circumstances will permit.—In particular, I beseech you, if you ever loved me, and if you now love God and your brethren, to have no respect of persons in stationing the preachers, in choosing children for Kingswood School, in disposing of the yearly contribution and the Preachers' Fund, or any other public money; but do all things with a single eye, as I have done from the beginning. Go on thus, doing all things without prejudice or partiality, and God will be with you even to the end.

"JOHN WESLEY."

But besides the fears that were entertained upon this subject, many of the people, as well as some of the preachers, were apprehensive that, on Mr. Wesley's demise, convulsions and divisions in the connexion would be the necessary consequence of that event: and though those fears were not realized to the extent that some apprehended, yet they proved to be not altogether without foundation. The form of government to be established in the Society for the future, gave rise to various opinions. Some were for adopting what was contemptuously denominated, by their opponents, "the bishop plan." It was thought that it would give energy to the measures of the conference to appoint a few of the oldest of the preachers as a kind of executive government, who should be invested with authority nearly, if not altogether equal, to what Mr. Wesley himself had possessed. But this plan, which was at first proposed by a few who were suspected of aspiring to this kind of episcopacy themselves, failed to give general satis-

faction to the preachers. It was therefore abandoned, and the present system, of dividing the kingdom into districts, was ultimately adopted in its stead. In the projection of the latter system, the connexion was much indebted to the wisdom and prudence of Mr. William Thompson, one of the preachers; and such was the approbation it procured, as well as the estimation in which he was held, that he was chosen to fill the place of president at the ensuing conference. Mr. Thompson was a man of piety and considerable ability: and after having filled the chair with credit to himself, and to the entire satisfaction of his brethren, he proposed that the same person should not, till after the lapse of eight years, occupy the president's chair a second time. This rule, which was voted into a law, as a sensible anonymous writer observes, "bears a semblance of liberty, but does not possess the substance; for by its operation, the most suitable person in the connexion may be precluded from the chair, merely from the circumstance of his having filled it, though with universal approbation. A man in so high and important an office, however qualified, is apt, for the first time, to be disconcerted; but on his being re-chosen, and a while in the habit of presiding, he would obtain that confidence so very necessary for moderating a popular assembly."

A matter of greater consequence, however, than the mere circumstance of settling the future form

of government in the connexion, excited a considerable degree of agitation throughout the Methodist societies in England. Many of the preachers who were disaffected to the church, as we have already seen, had long wished for an entire separation from it, but were frustrated in their designs during Mr. Wesley's life, by his power and authority. But that which they were unable to effect during the time they were under his control, they succeeded in bringing about, immediately after he was removed from their head. The conference felt no hesitation, as soon as they were left to transact their own affairs, to vote themselves into the office of the priesthood, and to adopt the principle of sacramental administration. This measure, though it had not the immediate effect of withdrawing *all* the Methodists *at once* from the communion of the Established Church, had very generally, at a subsequent period, that unhappy tendency.

That, in a country where religious toleration prevails to such an extent as in England, men have every right to act upon their own convictions, must at once be admitted; but it is equally certain that no artifice or misrepresentation is necessary to support any cause that is intrinsically good, or that possesses in itself a recommendation to the reason and judgment of mankind at large. The advocates of this measure, which they have denominated only "a partial separation from the

church," have, ever since its adoption, had the want of modesty to plead the example of Mr. Wesley as a precedent for their proceedings; and thus to represent him as one of the most inconsistent men that ever made a public declaration either from the pulpit or the press. His ordinations for America and Scotland have been urged as a nullification of all his former professions respecting the adherence of the Methodists to the Church of England; and the preachers who effected that change in the relative position which Methodism had previously occupied, have inferred that his example was a complete justification of their proceedings, and, at the same time, of their professing to be his obsequious and legitimate followers. But, let the candid judge whether there be any parallel between the cases or not.

We are not to suppose, however, with Dr. Southey, that Mr. Wesley's opinion on this subject "rested on no better ground than its convenience to his immediate purpose." The sincerity of his conviction will appear from an entry in his journal, nearly *forty* years before any of his ordinations took place, in which we find the following observations:—"I set out for Bristol. On the road I read over Lord King's account of the Primitive Church. In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draught. But, if so, it would follow that bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of

one order: and that, originally, every Christian congregation was a church, independent on all others." Hence it is plain that he had been long of Lord King's opinion; and that, therefore, it was no "pretext" upon his part to meet any emergent circumstance in his Trans-Atlantic societies. But when he acted upon this principle, it was with an obvious reference to the supposed inherent power of his order as a priest of the catholic church; and what parallel the ingenuity of man could discover between this, and a body of laymen who had never received any order at all, by a vote among themselves, which was carried by a simple majority, constituting themselves legitimate presbyters, we confess is beyond the powers of our minds to imagine. Even should the principle upon which Mr. Wesley's ordinations were performed be conceded, the fact is clear that no number of laymen have any power to vote themselves into an order to which they had no previous pretensions. Moreover, it must be admitted, that, if Mr. Wesley's ordinations could be made at all lawful under any circumstance, in every instance in which he performed them, they were justified by the imperative necessity of the case; but no such necessity could be pleaded by the preachers in England or Ireland, had they even possessed the power to which ordinary presbyters lay claim. Besides, in the instances in which Mr. Wesley exercised episcopal authority, the measures he adopted did not consti-

tute a separation from the church to which he belonged, as they were carried into effect in those places only where the church of England had virtually ceased to exist. But, was this the case in England, when the measures of the conference were brought into operation? As it was not, there can be therefore no parallel between the two cases.

Mr. Wesley's apology for the steps he had taken with regard to America, may be seen from the following observations addressed to the Methodist societies in that country :—

"By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from the mother country, and erected into independent states. The English government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the states of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the congress, partly by the provincial assemblies; but no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation, some thousands of the inhabitants of these States desire my advice, and, in compliance with their desire, I have drawn up a little sketch.

"Lord King's account of the primitive church convinced me, many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned, from time to time, to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our travelling

preachers. But I have still refused: not only for peace' sake, but because I was determined, as little as possible to violate the established order of the national church to which I belonged.

"But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops, who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, neither any parish-ministers; so that for some hundred miles together, there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest."

Mr. Wesley's reasons for acting as he had done towards the Scottish Methodists were somewhat similar to those which he assigned for the case mentioned above, though perhaps not altogether so strong. He had, at first, been received and encouraged by some pious ministers in the kirk of Scotland; but these good men had been called to their eternal reward, and their places filled by men who were inveterately hostile to the doctrines, as well as the discipline which he had established in his societies. Influenced by the same spirit which had been evinced by their Antinomian brethren in England, they propagated every slander respecting him that they could glean from the most unprincipled of his enemies, repelled the members of the Methodist society from the Lord's Table, and

even refused to baptize their children. Under these circumstances, Mr. Wesley judged he was at liberty to exercise that power which he supposed he possessed, in ordaining some of his preachers for Scotland. And it must be admitted, that being assisted by some other presbyters of the church of England, his ordination was as valid as that which is practised in the Scottish establishment. The reasons he assigned for the step which he took in reference to Scotland were three:—1. That he never was connected with the church of Scotland. 2. The desire of doing more good. 3. The absolute necessity of the case, as the ministers in Scotland had repeatedly refused to allow the Methodists to remain in communion with the kirk, unless they would renounce their connexion with the society to which they belonged.

It has been justly observed, that "the English hierarchy had no cause of complaint, for their authority in the United States of America had completely ceased—neither had the Scotch clergy, who refused the Christian rites to the Methodists, except they submitted to terms which involved a sacrifice of principle and of conscience." But the very circumstance of his having *ordained* certain preachers for the duties required in these instances, was a manifest proof he was convinced that, as mere laymen, they had no right to discharge them. We therefore consider all he did, in reference to America and Scotland, as a testi-

mony, upon the part of Mr. Wesley, against that principle which was admitted and acted on, after his death, by the conference in England.

It should not be concealed, however, that, after his assumption of episcopal authority, Mr. Wesley was prevailed upon, by some of the preachers, to ordain three of them without sending them out of England; but, whatever was his motive for doing so, we have the authority of the clergyman who assisted him in those ordinations, for saying, that he deeply regretted this act, when he afterwards took a calm and unbiassed view of the subject. In reply to a pamphlet written by Mr. Samuel Bradburn, in 1793, the Rev. Mr. Creighton observes:—"You say 'Mr. W. never repented of the steps he had taken.' If you mean the ordination, and the allowing preachers to administer the ordinances in Great Britain, I must take the liberty positively to contradict you. He *did* repent of it; and, with tears, expressed his sorrow both in public and private. In the last edition of the large Minutes, printed about a year and a half before his death, he intimates nearly the same thing, with a kind of sarcasm thus:—'But, how hard is it to abide here? (*i. e.* content to be a lay preacher,) and not wish to be a little higher?—suppose to be ordained?' He likewise expressed his sorrow respecting this matter at the Leeds conference, in 1789, and occasionally afterwards in London, until his death. About six weeks before that event, he said to a respectable person near London, 'They

(the preachers) are now too powerful for me.' I had an opportunity of knowing his particular sentiments from August, 1789, to his death, when I conducted the press under him." This testimony from a gentleman who, being a presbyter of the church of England, had been induced to assist Mr. Wesley in his ordinations, is a sufficient proof that the latter was prevailed upon by the undue influence of some of the preachers to act as he had done, especially as his brother Charles had ceased to afford a counter-acting influence to their projects of separation.

The advocates of the subsequent change in the Methodist economy have played upon the equivalence of the words—*ordain* and *appoint*, and on this ground have endeavoured to establish their claims to the essence of ordination, because they received their appointment from Mr. Wesley, although, in Methodist phraseology, that term was not in general use. But, granting that ordain and appoint signify the same thing, the person ordained or appointed can lay no claim to a power which the ordainer or appointer had no intention to convey. Now, Mr. Wesley's sermon in Cork was preached some years subsequent to the execution of the Deed of Declaration, and those other transactions of his life, to which the seceding Methodists refer as a justification of their after-proceedings: and in that sermon he says, "Did we ever *appoint* you to administer sacraments—to exercise the priestly office? Such a design *never entered our mind:* it

was the farthest from our thoughts. And, if any preacher had taken such a step, we should have looked upon it * * * as a recantation of our connexion." It is plain, therefore, that, waiving all the forms of ordination, and supposing that Mr. Wesley possessed all the powers implied in episcopal authority, we have here sufficient evidence that no such appointment as the preachers of the conference lay claim to, ever proceeded from him; and we are justified in charging them, in the most unqualified manner, as far as the administration of the sacraments is concerned, with being "self-appointed." Such is a fair and impartial statement of the case; and let the reader judge from the extracts given in the eleventh chapter of this work, how far Mr. Wesley's professed followers have regarded his "judgment or advice," in that measure which they took the earliest opportunity of adopting after his decease.

The agitation of the question of sacramental administration in England did not fail to create a considerable degree of confusion and discontent in the society at the time: and the disputes which it occasioned soon led to another, headed by Mr. Alexander Kilham, and which issued in a partial division in the connexion. This man, who had been deeply infected with those democratical principles which had, at that time, been imported from France, had unfortunately an inclination for introducing practically into the Methodist body his

own diseased and unsound opinions. To bring about his favourite project, several publications were addressed to the people, reflecting on the parts, the piety, and even the moral honesty of some of the preachers in the connexion. These reflections, though in general gross calumnies, gained some credit, and Kilham was enabled to raise an association of followers, who, in the year 1797, separating from their brethren, and forming a popular system of church government, denominated themselves "The Methodist New Connexion," but who, from their leader, have been generally known by the name of *Kilhamites*.

Since that period, the Methodists in England have been frequently disturbed by unsettled and designing men, who have used every means to lead away disciples after them; but, as their motives were in general questionable, and their proceedings extravagant, the good sense of mankind soon passed sentence upon them: and the British connexion is still rapidly increasing in numbers, respectability, and influence. At the last conference, begun in Bristol, on Wednesday, July 25, 1838, the number of members returned for Great Britain was 296,801, besides those who are under the care of the British conference in their different foreign stations throughout the world; and, in justice to this large and influential body, whatever objection we may have to that principle which made them a separate people from the national establishment, it must be

admitted that they differ from all other sectarian bodies in the soundness of their political principles, and the friendly disposition which they frequently evince towards the church of England. "Concerning the general and remoter consequences of Methodism," says Dr. Southey, "opinions will differ. They who consider the wide-spreading schism to which it has led, and who know that the welfare of the country is vitally connected with its church establishment, may think that the evil overbalances the good; but the good may endure, and the evil be only for a time. In every other sect there is an inherent spirit of hostility to the church of England, too often and too naturally connected with diseased political opinions. So it was in the beginning, and so it will continue to be, as long as those sects endure. But Methodism is free from this. * * * Nor is it beyond the bounds of reasonable hope, that, conforming itself to the original intention of its founders, it may again draw towards the establishment from which it has seceded, and deserve to be recognized as an auxiliary institution, its ministers being analagous to the regulars, and its members to the tertiaries and various confraternities of the Romish church. The obstacles to this are surely not insuperable, perhaps not so difficult as they may appear. And were this effected, John Wesley would then be ranked, not only among the most remarkable and influential men of his age, but among the great benefactors of his country and his kind."

CHAPTER XIII.

DIVISION AMONGST THE METHODISTS OF IRELAND.

When the British conference adopted the principle of sacramental administration amongst themselves, the Irish Methodists alone, of all the societies that had been formed in both hemispheres, adhered to the simple plan originally established by Mr. Wesley and those that were in connexion with him. In the year 1792, as appears from the Minutes of the Irish conference, the subject was discussed in that assembly, whether the plan pursued by their English brethren should be adopted in this country or not, and it was unanimously rejected by the preachers assembled on that occasion. But, notwithstanding the unanimity with which this vote was passed, it is evident, both from preceding and subsequent circumstances, that, even at that time, there were preachers in the Irish connexion who were anxious for a change in the economy of Methodism; and had they seen any prospect of success, it is possible they would not have acquiesced so readily in this resolution. The bursting forth of the Irish rebel-

lion, however, about five or six years after this period, laid prostrate all the schemes of visionary theorists; and every minor object of anxiety, for a while, was absorbed in a well grounded apprehension for their own personal security, and for the fate of this country, which was then placed in such imminent danger by the insurgents.

During this rebellion, which arose to its acme in 1798, the Methodists gave abundant proof to the government, as well as to the world at large, that men of sound principles and good morals, whatever corrupt and superficial politicians may assert, make the best subjects at all times, and are most to be depended upon in the hour of danger and public alarm. Indeed, it is but justice to acknowledge, whatever modifications Wesleyan Methodism may have assumed at any time, that loyalty to their sovereign, and a willing obedience to "the powers that be," are incorporated with all the religious sentiments of its adherents, and exhibited in their conduct, whenever the interests of their country require their assistance. Nor was the government, at that time, insensible of this constitutional integrity in the Methodist body; as, perhaps the circumstances connected with the meeting of the conference in July, 1798, stand unprecedented in the history of any country, and are certainly without a parallel in the proceedings of our own. At that eventful period, when the Roman Catholics generally, and a great majority

of the Dissenters in the province of Ulster, had united together for the overthrow of the altar and the throne, and it had been found necessary to interdict all meetings and assemblages of men, amounting to the number of five, (the military only excepted,) the Methodist preachers met together, from all parts of Ireland, in their usual place of meeting, Whitefriar-street, and without a sentinel, were permitted to remain in private conference with closed doors, for nearly three weeks together: and then, at the termination of their sittings, they had letters of permission and protection from the government, to proceed from the metropolis to their respective destinations, throughout all the ramifications of the country, from north to south. One can scarcely say whether the confidence implied in this treatment was more creditable to the government itself or to the body of men who were the objects of its confidence.

It is, however, to be regretted, that, as soon as the troubles occasioned by the Irish rebellion began to subside, the preachers who were favourable to a change in the connexion commenced their operations, and, in a few years, the question respecting the administration of the ordinances in the Methodist society became a matter of public discussion throughout various parts of Ireland. The growing prosperity and increasing respectability of the English connexion, had, no doubt, a considerable influence upon the minds of some of the

Irish preachers; and they imagined, if they could bring about the same measure in this country, which had been carried so triumphantly in England, that it would contribute to place them upon an equal footing of independence with their English brethren, and add to their official importance and respectability. But the Methodists in Ireland had known very little of the agitations of the society in England; and being in general steadily attached to the established church, they had no desire for any departure from that system which had been originally adopted by their founder. Considering themselves as auxiliaries to the national church, their only design was to give additional means of instruction and spiritual edification to their fellow-countrymen, and to diffuse, as far as possible, the savour of experimental religion and practical godliness throughout the land. Accordingly, their preachers, at first, assuming no character above that of the rest of the laity, were only employed as expounders of God's holy word, and had no intention of usurping the office of the sacerdotal order, by the administration of the holy sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. When, therefore, the subject of innovation upon this plan began first to be agitated in the connexion, the Irish Methodists in general were not so obsequious to the innovators as their brethren in England had been. They saw, that, in a popish country, the established church was the principal permanent

support which the doctrines of the reformation had in the island: and that every member withdrawn from her communion tended so far to weaken her interest, and therefore should be esteemed a proportionate evil. These considerations, had they even judged separation from the church to be lawful in itself, were sufficient to show them that it was inexpedient; and they therefore resolved, in several places throughout Ireland, that they would resist every attempt to alter their original economy, and would receive no preachers who were not like-minded upon that subject with themselves.

Had the Methodists of this country, however, been undecided upon this subject, the minds of the wavering ought to have been completely set at rest, by a letter addressed, in 1814, by Mr. William Stewart, to the Methodist preachers of Ireland, in which he not only discusses the propriety of the measure itself, but also charges some of his junior brethren amongst the preachers, with being the sole cause of that agitation which had been created throughout the societies. As it was generally understood that Mr. Stewart, being a member of the conference, had a better opportunity of knowing the real state of the case than those who were little acquainted with the more private proceedings of that body, his letter produced a most powerful effect upon the minds of the people throughout the Irish connexion; and contributed, in no small

degree, to raise that opposition to the measure which eventually led to the formation of a distinct itinerancy, as soon as it received the sanction of the conference.

It does not appear that Mr. Stewart conceived the administration of the sacraments by lay-preachers to be in itself unlawful; but his arguments upon the ground of the inexpediency of the measure are unanswerable, and prove that not only the question of consistency, but even of moral honesty, was at issue between its advocates and opponents. "The venerable founder of our societies," says he, "was of the established church; and, although, in the course of his long and laborious life, he met with many provocations to depart from it, the like of which have never occurred to us, yet to it he remained inviolably attached—continued to repel every effort for separation, and died within its pale! To his instrumentality, generally, we owe it, that ever we obtained a share in the gospel ministry, or any official situation in the church of Christ. But, would he have accepted any one of us as a preacher in his connexion, upon the separating plan? You know he would not. We joined with him on his own terms,—were glad to be received as labourers in the same vineyard: and, had a test of undeviating attachment to these first principles been then proposed, we would readily have subscribed to it. When in the exercise of our sacred profession, we visited new places

and sought admission into the houses of the people, we assured them, that so far from being inimical to the church, we were friends and members of it; hence, many doors were opened, which otherwise would have remained for ever shut against us. When we invited people to join our society, we held it out, as an inducement, that we did not desire them to forsake their own church: that our object was not to form a party, but simply to turn sinners from the error of their ways, to 'serve God in spirit and in truth.' Hence, many joined who would never have been united to us on any other principle! Some of these, 'tis true, are now in the church above, and can offer no remonstrance to the proposed change; but there are others still in the church below, who can, and doubtless will, remonstrate. When making collections for our superannuated preachers, and the work in general, we have appealed for assistance to some of the most respectable members of the establishment, both of the clergy and laity, on this principle, we have succeeded, because they believed we were sincere. By the very same plea, we have obtained ground for the building of chapels from different gentlemen; and, from the public at large, we have collected hundreds, yea, thousands of pounds, which would not have been raised in Ireland, had we been a separate party. Many persons suspected our motives in the beginning, and opposed us as innovators. We affirmed the contrary, not merely

as individuals, but as a body, (the Minutes of our conference, together with several public addresses to our people, bear witness;) and, by this very weapon, we have not only conquered the opposition of some of our greatest foes, but conciliated their friendship, and engaged their influence in our favour. On this ground we have hitherto possessed the high confidence of the government under which we live; and, by our loyalty, have been viewed as important auxiliaries to the state: and, to the church, by our religion. And to what is it owing that the name of WESLEY, our honoured founder, has been so often spoken of in terms of the highest commendation, by statesmen of the first talents and official characters of the greatest eminence; but that he continued firmly attached to the Establishment. Upon the whole, when we take into account the principle upon which we first became preachers of the gospel, the plan upon which we have hitherto proceeded, the public professions we have made, together with the interest we have engaged solely by these means,—I ask, is it candid?—is it ingenuous?—is it expedient?—is it just, either to our connexion, to ourselves, or to the world at large, now to contradict the whole, by resorting to a measure which we gave the world reason to believe we would never adopt? Oft have we been accused with hypocrisy and dissimulation,—crimes which our very hearts have ever abhorred; yet, if the proposed change be carried into effect,

will it afford no ground for the charge, either in fact, or in the public estimation?"

At the meeting of the conference immediately before the publication of Mr. Stewart's letter, a vote had been passed in favour of the change; but, at the earnest entreaty of some of the leading members of the connexion, the operation of this vote was suspended for twelve months, until the sense of the body at large should be fully ascertained upon the subject. During the following year, as the zeal of both parties was in a considerable degree of excitement, the measure was fully canvassed; and its inexpediency was so clearly pointed out, as well as the overwhelming torrent of public opinion so decidedly expressed against it, that in July, 1815, the preachers were obliged to abandon their favourite project, and to publish a letter to the societies that had petitioned for the sacraments, stating the impracticability of complying with their request. "As guardians of Methodism in Ireland," say they, "every thing that can be done consistent with the best interests of the body, we feel most cordially disposed to do; but, on a review of all circumstances, we assure you, in the most affectionate manner, that, in our judgment, to meet your case as might be desired by you, would certainly prove injurious to our connexion at large."

But the fomenters of the popular discontent were not to be discouraged by the gloomy forebodings

of some of their brethren, and were resolved to hazard every consequence in accomplishing those designs which they had been so long projecting. Accordingly, some of the preachers, dissatisfied with the decision to which the conference had come, returned to their circuits, and, without license or appointment from any quarter, began to act upon their own judgment, and administered the Lord's Supper to every one that was willing to receive it at their hands. This proceeding, probably, accelerated the subsequent measure of the conference: as, at the ensuing meeting of that body, in 1816, the matter was brought forward again, and finally passed by a majority of voices: sixty-two appearing for the measure, and only twenty-six against it. By this vote the preachers empowered themselves to administer the ordinances under certain regulations and restrictions that were stated in a "Letter of Pacification," which was afterwards published by the Conference.

The result of this decision was such as might be expected, from the excitement it had already created throughout the connexion. The previous year, by the mere agitation of the subject, a diminution of numbers had taken place to the amount of 815 persons. But when it was found that the feelings and judgment of a very large proportion of the Methodist body had been so completely opposed, and that the preachers in the majority were resolved to carry their measure, be the con-

sequences what they may, in the year immediately subsequent to the vote, no less than 7511 members left the connexion; 1248 of whom were belonging to those circuits that were accommodated with the sacraments! In addition to this, many others, who were not members but were contributing friends, instantly withdrew their accustomed support; so that the funds of the connexion began to fall far short of meeting the demands upon them, notwithstanding all the extra exertions made by the preachers to increase them for that purpose.

During the discussion of this measure in the Irish connexion, several meetings had been held, resolutions entered into, and circular letters issued on both sides, for the purpose of explaining or defending their respective opinions upon the question at issue. And as several of those meetings had previously come to the resolution of not receiving or supporting any preacher who should adhere to the body of the separatists, as soon as the Conference had decided in favour of the measure, a number of leaders and local preachers assembled in Clones, and commenced an itinerancy upon the original principles of Methodism, as it had first been established by Mr. Wesley and his assistants, and hitherto professed by the Methodists in Ireland.

In the meantime the great body of the people throughout the kingdom were still in suspense

about what might be the ultimate issue of the whole affair. They were, in general, not prepared to believe that the preachers of the conference would be so infatuated as to persevere in their measure, in opposition to such a large and influential portion of the connexion, as well as at the expense of the unity of the body, of whose interests they professed to be the legitimate "guardians." They therefore waited with patience the result of the next meeting of conference, which was to decide them in the line of conduct they were to pursue in reference to the newly-raised itinerancy. It was, in the meantime, agreed by the friends of primitive Methodism, that a general committee of representatives should assemble in Dublin during the sitting of conference in July, 1817, and unite in their endeavours to prevail with the preachers to repeal that vote which had given such general offence, and been the cause of so much disunion in the Irish connexion. A circular letter was therefore forwarded to every part of the country, inviting two competent persons from each district to meet in Dublin, in order, if possible, in conjunction with the stewards and leaders of the society in Dublin, to succeed in making such arrangements as would restore peace to the connexion. Accordingly, at the appointed time, thirty-five representatives, from various parts of Ireland, assembled in Dublin: by whom, together with the letters which were received by the committee, it

was calculated that at least three-fourths of the Methodist population of Ireland were fairly represented. The instructions almost universally given them by their constituents were, to insist upon the unqualified repeal of the vote passed in the preceding year; and in accordance with this, their first communication to the conference was to that effect, but, at the same time, expressed in the most respectful and affectionate language. This commenced a correspondence between the chairman of the general committee and the secretary of the conference; several letters passed between them; and a deputation from each of these bodies met twice to discuss the matter; but all ended without producing any good effect. The committee, as they were instructed, insisted upon the unqualified repeal of the vote, and promised their assistance in every other way to restore peace to the connexion: they even suggested that two or three preachers might be set apart for the administration of the ordinances to the aggrieved societies; and, with this arrangement, notwithstanding its anomalous nature, it appears they would have been satisfied. But the preachers were inflexible. They expressed their determination not to rescind the vote; and the parties separated as they had come together, the final breach between them appearing to be inevitable.

Had the members of the conference been as accommodating as they professed to be at the com-

mencement of this correspondence, there is no doubt but peace might have been restored to the connexion, and a final separation avoided between the two parties. But they were resolved to persevere in the measure which they had unfortunately adopted, and thought, by their united efforts, that they would be able to put down ultimately all the opposition that had been raised up against them. That the project was their own, and that no such necessity for its adoption existed in the connexion as had been represented, the determined hostility to it, evinced on the part of the people, abundantly proves.

The attempt of the general committee having failed, and the preachers having resolved to abide by their measure, the friends of Primitive Methodism perceived that all hopes of accommodation were at an end; and, therefore, a number of them continued to meet in Dublin, and to consult what was most advisable to be done, under the existing circumstances. Some of them were so sanguine as to hope that, although the conference as a body had refused to replace Methodism on its ancient, simple foundation, yet as the preachers had not been unanimous in passing the vote, the minority might be induced to act consistently, and to join with them in collecting the scattered materials of a much injured connexion. And, notwithstanding the newly-raised itinerancy which had commenced at Clones was still being carried on by its friends,

the great body of the Primitive Methodists continued anxious that the bonds should not be snapped at once that bound them to their former friends and preachers, with whom they had been so long and intimately acquainted. The Rev. Adam Averell had publicly entered his protest against the measure of the Conference, in July, 1816; and therefore a correspondence was opened with him, as the best person to bring about an object so desirable to the connexion in general.

As Mr. Averell, whose character is well known to the Methodists of Great Britain and Ireland, holds so prominent a station at present in the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist connexion, no doubt some account of him might be expected by the reader in this place. He was born at Mullan, in the county of Tyrone, on the 7th of May, 1754. At a very early period of life, his tender mind was impressed with the fear of the Lord, and he entertained an earnest desire to become a minister of the everlasting gospel. Having accordingly passed through his preparatory studies, in the year 1770, he entered as a student in the Irish University, under the Rev. Thomas Torrens; and had the rooms assigned him, which had been formerly occupied by his relative, the Right Reverend Dr. Averell, Lord Bishop of Limerick. As soon as he had completed his undergraduate course, he was ordained by Dr. Cope, the bishop of Clonfert; and a few days after preached his first sermon in Galway.

The circumstance which led Mr. Averell to an acquaintance with the Methodists, was apparently accidental, but it was such as afterwards directed the whole course of his life, in that sphere of usefulness in which he has continued to move to a very protracted and venerable old age. The Methodists, it appears, had been making a considerable progress in the town of Athlone, where Mr. Averell then resided, and where he had acted for some time as the chief magistrate of the borough. This having therefore given some uneasiness to the curate, he applied to Mr. Averell to preach against them, as the best method of impeding their progress for the future. The latter expressed his willingness to engage in the duty, but confessed his ignorance of their principles and religious opinions; and said to his brother clergyman, that, if he could procure him some book that would give him the necessary information upon this subject, he would cheerfully comply with his request. This, however, could not be procured for him at the time; but shortly after, Mr. Walter Griffith, a Methodist preacher, having called upon him, and being applied to for such a book, put into his hands one of Mr. Wesley's "Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion." Mr. Averell read it with attention, but instead of furnishing him with any ground for attacking the Methodists, it instantly disarmed him of all his prejudices against them, and from that period he espoused their cause with affection and energy.

In the year 1788 he went to serve the cure of Aghaboe, the incumbency of the celebrated Dr. Ledwich, the learned and talented author of the "Antiquities of Ireland:" but in about three years afterwards he resigned his curacy, having first offered his services gratuitously, as he had some scruples upon his mind about receiving money for preaching the gospel. It is, however, to be observed, that Mr. Averell did not entertain the opinion that it was unlawful for the ministers of Christ in general to receive that support that was necessary from the people among whom they laboured; his objection only regarded himself personally, and originated, we believe, in some resolution he had formed when he was very young, respecting his future conduct in life, if God should ever call him to the important work of the Christian ministry.

Before the division which occurred in the Methodist body in Ireland, the connexion was much indebted to Mr. Averell for his disinterested zeal and unwearied exertions in promoting its interests. He had devoted his time, his talents, and a considerable part of his property, to the maintenance of Methodism; and had for several years gone to England, at his own expense, as the Representative of his Irish brethren in the British conference. He had seen, however, with regret, the innovation that had been made on Primitive Methodism in this country; and, although he did not at once unite himself with those preachers who had been called

out to labour on the old plan, he entered his protest against the measure which had been adopted by the Conference, and seemed for a time to occupy neutral ground, until he should see the way that providence would open for him in which to pursue his future line of conduct.

The friends of Primitive Methodism in Dublin, knowing the intimacy and fraternal feeling which had subsisted so long between Mr. Averell and some of the minority in the conference, thought he would be the most suitable person to open a correspondence with them, on the subject of the restoration of the old system, as it had hitherto stood in Ireland. When it was perceived that the majority had been deaf to all the remonstrances of the people, and that neither facts nor arguments could induce them to retrace their steps, some imagined, if the minority were really sincere in the vote they had given, and would act a consistent part, that they would be able to re-erect the ancient fabric of Methodism on a more secure basis than ever, and that the innovators, in the mean time, might go on their own way if they pleased, or that, perhaps, convinced of their error, they might be induced to return to the old plan, from which they had so recently departed.

When application was made to Mr. Averell upon this subject, he considered the proposed object a desirable one; and accordingly addressed a circular letter to the preachers respectively, calling

upon them to join him in "replacing Methodism on its original basis in Ireland, as it stood at the period of the decease of the late Reverend and venerable John Wesley." To this letter, which was conceived in such a spirit of Christian love and conciliation as did honour to the writer, a circular reply was issued by the preachers who were then stationed in Dublin, in which the appellations of a wolf, an Ahitophel, and a Judas, were liberally bestowed upon Mr. Averell, as an indication of their gratitude for his former services in the connexion.

The acrimony evinced by some of the preachers upon this occasion towards this aged and venerable minister of Christ, was such as convinced the Primitive Methodists that they sustained no loss by the refusal of such men to co-operate with them in the work they had proposed to themselves. It would, however, be injustice done towards the whole body of the preachers to say that this feeling was universal. Some of them returned answers to Mr. Averell in the same spirit in which he had addressed them: and it is probable, had they been able to trust God for their future support, and to relinquish their claims upon a fund to which they had long contributed, and on which they calculated for a maintenance in old age, that many of them would have acceded to his proposal with alacrity and delight. But such is the infirmity of human nature, that we easily persuade

ourselves we are acting conscientiously, when self-interest is at hand to second and support the motion.

In the mean time, the preachers sent out from Clones were making a rapid progress both in the North and South: several circuits had been formed, and societies organized upon the old plan; and they themselves were resolved, by the blessing of God, to remain in the communion of that church which had been cemented with the blood of her martyrs—had weathered every storm which had been raised against her by violence and faction—for which many of their ancestors had bled—and, what was better than all, which had been "the pillar and ground of the truth," for so many generations, amidst their benighted and superstitious fellow-countrymen. One of these preachers had been invited to Dublin by a few of the more zealous and active members of the society, and had commenced preaching in a school-house on the Coombe, where all were invited to attend who were favourable to those principles upon which the Methodist societies were originally formed. But the great body of the leaders, stewards, and trustees, of the several preaching-houses in Dublin, declined immediately uniting with them, and still continued in consultation about what was necessary to be done to secure the continuance of the old plan of Methodism in Ireland. Had they acted with more decision and promptitude, it is

probable their success would have been greater in retaining the members of the original society; for, whilst they were spending their time in deliberation, their opponents were not idle in using every art which they could possibly practise to conciliate or gain over those who were friendly to the preachers personally, but who were decidedly hostile to the measures they had adopted.

In this critical conjuncture the leaders and trustees in Dublin found they had only their choice between two alternatives, either to retain possession of the preaching-houses, that they had built and hitherto supported solely for that cause which they were maintaining against the conference, or to make every sacrifice for the sake of peace,—relinquish those houses to which they had an *equitable* right,—and to provide congregational accommodations for themselves, where they might in tranquillity carry on that system, which, in their judgment, was so well adapted to the peculiar wants and exigencies of Ireland. As men of peace they chose the latter: and as an eligible concern speedily presented itself, at 62, South Great George's-street, they embraced it with alacrity, and the premises having been fitted up for the accommodation of the people, the place was opened for preaching on the 20th of December, 1817, where large congregations subsequently attended, and the distracted society at last found an asylum from "the din of controversy, and the strife of tongues."

Hitherto the friends of Primitive Methodism in Ireland had been unanimous as to the principle of maintaining the original system; but there was some difference of opinion among them about the mode of accomplishing that desirable object. Upon this apparent disunion, therefore, their opponents had calculated largely, as likely in itself to put down that opposition which had been raised to their measure. But these hopes were of short duration. Circular letters were soon forwarded to different parts of the country, inviting the friends of the common cause to meet in Dublin on the 5th of January, 1818; where those regulations were agreed upon which were afterwards published under the title of "The General Principles of the Methodist Constitution."

The expediency of this agreement being so apparent to all the parties concerned, and, some circuits not having been represented at the meeting, in consequence of the shortness of the notice, an adjourned meeting was appointed to be held at Clones on the 27th of the same month, where the "General Principles" underwent a second very full discussion, and were agreed to without a dissenting voice.

The consent of the representatives of circuits being thus obtained, it was necessary also that the "Principles" should be adopted by the preachers who were then travelling upon the original plan of Wesleyan Methodism. Accordingly, when the

latter assembled in the Conference held in Dublin, in the ensuing month of July, after an ample examination of their details, they were fully and unanimously adopted, as containing a faithful outline of the design, doctrines, and discipline of Primitive Wesleyan Methodism. In these "Principles" the following questions are asked, in reference to the security of the body against any future innovation:—

"Q. What shall be done to prevent the evil which might arise in future, by an attempted encroachment on these fundamental principles?

"A. Let every member of the conference, as a qualification to sit, speak, or vote therein, declare under his hand, in a book to be provided for the purpose, his unfeigned assent and consent thereto; and his sincere determination to abide in strict conformity to them, as long as he shall continue a member of the conference; and let all the general acts, and specific regulations of conference proceed accordingly.

"Q. Can any further barrier be placed to resist and suppress a future spirit of innovation?

"A. As we uniformly declare, that our object is to constitute a religious society, and preserve harmony among ourselves, and not to erect ourselves into a new church, we do hereby pronounce our judgment, that if any member of the conference shall propose any resolution subversive of this principle, or opposed to the design, doctrine,

or discipline herein contained, he is unworthy to be a member of the conference, and thereby excludes himself."

One circumstance, however, should not be overlooked in the regulations adopted by the Primitive Methodists on this occasion, which, though by no means unprecedented, was represented by their opponents as a deviation from the system which had hitherto been pursued in conducting the meetings of conference. The regulation to which we allude may be seen from the following questions and answers:—

"Q. As the conference is the governing body, who constitute the conference?

"A. All the travelling preachers in the connexion; and one steward or leader from each circuit, to be annually elected by the stewards and leaders convened at a quarterly meeting.

"Q. Have all the members of conference, so constituted, an equal voice in the concerns of the body?

"A. During the examination of the preachers' characters, preachers only are to be present, and decide.

"During the appointments to the circuits, all the members may be present and give their opinion; but the preachers are to decide.

"During every other business or discussion, all the members may sit, speak, and vote, without distinction."

As, by these regulations, certain stewards and leaders, who were elected for that purpose, were permitted to sit and vote in the conference, a great outcry was raised amongst the preachers of the Secession, as if it was a complete departure from the principles of Methodism, and rendered null and void all the pretensions of those who had adopted it, to the title of "Primitive Wesleyan Methodists,"—a name which they had justly assumed as the followers of Mr. Wesley, and of his early coadjutors in the formation of the Methodist Societies.

It cannot but create a smile to hear men who have subverted the very ground upon which Methodism originally stood, talking about this prudential regulation, as a departure from the plans and regulations of Mr. Wesley. Especially as they are in the habit of representing Methodism as a system so indefinite in its nature, that it may be moulded and fashioned according to such circumstances as they may please to construe into "the leadings of Providence." The fact is, from the Larger Minutes, as they were first published, it appears that Mr. Wesley invited to the first conferences which he held, such clergymen of the Established Church as were willing to afford him their co-operation,—all the travelling preachers who could conveniently attend the meeting,—together with several judicious class-leaders and band-leaders who happened to reside in the place where the meeting of con-

ference was held. But the truth, when it is told, amounts to this, that the seceding preachers were not so much concerned about a deviation from the rules established by Mr. Wesley, as they were apprehensive their own leaders might be induced to demand a similar privilege, and so break up that system of a secret conference which those preachers have been always in the habit of holding among themselves. However, the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist preachers have no cause to regret the admission of representatives into their conference, as the experience of more than twenty years has fully proved that they are a valuable acquisition to that body, and have always most extensively relieved the preachers from much of the care and trouble which necessarily attend the transaction of the financial concerns of the connexion.

In the introduction to "The General Principles," there are some good remarks made upon the design of Methodism as it originally stood, and the motives of the persons who were engaged in replacing it on its former foundation.

"In submitting to the Methodist Connexion," say they, "the General Principles of Methodism, embodied in the following pages, agreed upon unanimously in Dublin, and confirmed, and adopted, by our respectable friends and brethren in the country; whereby a happy union, on solid principles, has been effected, and we are become one fold under the Great Shepherd, it must be obvious

to the candid and judicious reader, that it does not make any part of the scheme, to form a new sect, or to separate from the original Wesleyan Methodists. Our title to this distinction, and to all the rights and privileges belonging thereto, we unequivocally claim.

"In the scriptural doctrines, and primitive order of Methodist discipline, as taught and enforced by the late Rev. John Wesley, we are fully determined to abide; Mr. Wesley was raised up by Divine Providence, to lay the foundation of a great work; he was spared to a very ripe old age, to see his opening plan matured, and its beneficial tendency; and he rejoiced in the prosperous results. But as all human happiness has its alloy, Mr. Wesley, at the close of life, was mortified at being obliged to witness that spirit which the preachers so generally manifested, of innovating on his providential plan, by laying claim to the priestly office, without *order*, *authority*, or *appointment;* against which he declared to the very year of his decease.

"To guard against the recurrence of such a spirit's operating amongst us, is one principal design of the present publication. We now recur to the original principles, on which he stood so firm, and by means of which he was so abundantly useful, through his long and laborious life. We recite his design as stated by himself; we retain the doctrines which he taught, believing them to be true and Scriptural; and we enforce that discipline which he so strenuously maintained.

" The measures which we have adopted to restore and preserve our discipline, have been rendered necessary by the events which have lately occurred, and the vote which passed in the conference held in July 1816. The same spirit which so often, but in vain, endeavoured to prevail on Mr. Wesley to permit the preachers to erect themselves into an independent hierarchy, has burst forth like a torrent; and we have only arisen to stem the stream. It is true that our efforts to effect this, have been stigmatized by our opponents, as *heresy* and *schism:* but we leave the judicious to judge between us, and say, who are the schismatics, whether those who, having sapped a foundation, cause a rent and an uproar, and then set up the cry of schism and heresy through the land; or those, who having escaped the convulsion, have collected the materials, and returning to the solid rock, which remained where the old foundation stood, have re-erected the edifice in its native simplicity."

There could be no difficulty in making a decision upon this subject. The Primitive Methodists only occupied the ground upon which they had stood from the beginning; and whatever evils resulted from the separation between the two parties were justly chargeable upon the innovators, and not upon those who were perfectly satisfied that Methodism should remain among them, occupying the same relative position in which they had found it.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PRIMITIVE WESLEYAN METHODISTS OF IRELAND

When the division had taken place in the Methodist body, the trustees of the different chapels imagined they had a right to exclude from their occupancy the innovating preachers, and to introduce those who proceeded to travel upon the original principles of Methodism. In this, however, they found themselves altogether mistaken. It is true that upon the principles of equity the society had a right to the chapels which they had erected themselves, and which they never had designed for dissenting meeting-houses; but when the matter had undergone a legal investigation, it was found that they had unwittingly signed away this right, and that the houses were not their's at all; for "the conference plan," which, until this time, they did not fully understand, had made them the property of one hundred preachers, and by it they were held in trust, not for the society or for Primitive Methodism, as they had hitherto supposed, but for the use of those men who had

the privilege of being enrolled in the Deed of Declaration. Several chapels had been retained by the society at first, and occupied by their own preachers: but the case of the Derry preaching-house having been tried in a court of law, the error under which the trustees were labouring was found out, and the chapels were in consequence surrendered to the conference.

Had the Methodists been aware of the nature of "the conference plan," nothing is more certain than that this evil would have been prevented: but as they had not taken the trouble of informing themselves on the subject, they were obliged to suffer the consequence of their own simplicity, and relinquishing their right to those chapels which they had already erected, to build others for the same purpose. The rapid progress they made in the erection of new preaching-houses is astonishing, considering the means at the disposal of the society, At the conference held in 1819, it was found that the connexion was in possession of fifty-three preaching-houses, seventeen of which had been either fitted up, or nearly finished in the course of the preceding year; and in 1836 they had increased to the number of one hundred and seven.

By the issue of the investigation respecting the legal right to the occupancy of the Methodist chapels, a spirit of caution was excited in the settlement of those which were erected for the

use of the Primitive Wesleyan Methodists. Legal advice having been taken, a trust deed was drawn out for the preaching-house in South Great George's-street, Dublin, which was recommended to the Methodists of Ireland as embodying the best plan for disposing of the preaching-houses belonging to the connexion throughout the kingdom. By this deed of trust, should the Conference of the Primitive Methodists ever depart from the principles at present established amongst them, they forfeit their right to the possession of the chapel; and so long as any of the members adhere to Primitive Methodism in connexion with the Established Church, without the administration of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, they can claim the house so settled for their use exclusively. But if such members cease to exist in the district in which the said preaching-house is situated, and all the Methodists therein become dissenters, the deed states that "the said house and premises, with the appurtenances, are hereby declared to be alienated from the said society, and from thenceforth, for ever, to become vested in his majesty, his heirs and successors, * * * * to be disposed of by him and them as charitable property, or otherwise in such way and manner as his majesty, his heirs and successors, shall or may think proper to dispose of the same, any thing herein contained to the contrary in anywise notwithstanding.—It being the true intent and design

of Methodism in Ireland, that it shall remain and continue for ever hereafter a society only; and that said society, so constituted as aforesaid, never shall be changed into, or erect itself into, a sect or independent church."

Before the connexion had recovered its wonted vigour, after the serious shock which had been given it, the society in Dublin had to deplore the loss of one of its most tried, upright, and venerable members, in the person of Arthur Keene, Esq. This gentleman, whose memory is still cherished with respect and veneration by all who knew him, was, when very young, impressed with a sense of the importance of eternal things. He had, throughout a long life, supported and maintained that consistency of character which is so indispensably necessary to adorn a profession of the gospel. To the Widows' Alms-house in Whitefriar-street, he had always been a kind and bountiful benefactor: and in the service of that valuable institution, as well as of the Methodist society in Dublin, he had spent nearly the last thirty-four years of his life. His attachment to Primitive Methodism was such, and his influence in the society in Dublin so great, that he was a powerful means of keeping the latter united, and of preventing any serious innovation on the former. But the advances of old age, and the decay of nature, at length rendered him unable to withstand the spirit which had been excited by the preachers in

the connexion; and he, who had been so long the patriarch of Methodism in Dublin, the benefactor of the widows, and the hospitable friend of the preachers in general, having been assailed in the latter part of his life with abuse and calumny, from a quarter from which it could least have been expected, was at length obliged to retire from the publicity of office.

About eleven months after this occurrence, having suffered much for nearly five weeks from a violent spasmodic affection in his stomach, his happy spirit returned to him who gave it, rejoicing in the foretaste of those joys which God has laid up for them that love him. During the period of his last illness, his patience and resignation were uniformly evinced in the whole of his conduct; and the great atonement was the foundation upon which he built all his hopes. On the 15th of September, 1818, the morning on which he died, his children being assembled around his bed, he took an affectionate leave of them all; and said, "Satan has thrust sore at me; but every doubt is removed—the pleasant land is in view:

> "On Zion we shall stand, when escap'd to the shore,
> With palms in our hands, we will praise him the more;
> We'll range the sweet plains on the banks of the river,
> And sing of salvation for ever and ever."

The conclusion of this verse he repeated three times:—"For ever and ever, for ever and ever, for ever and ever."

The fellowship which he had so long enjoyed with many men of eminence in the religious world appears to have made a lively impression upon his mind in his dying moments; and, in an ecstacy of holy joy, he exclaimed, "I see a Wesley, a Fletcher, a Brooke, as if waiting to conduct me. Lord Jesus receive my spirit. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, and take me home." He then reclined his head on the pillow, and, without a struggle or a groan, exchanged a frail and decaying tabernacle for "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

As soon as the Primitive Methodists had ceased to be tormented with "the din of controversy," and had again become a rapidly increasing and prosperous body, the preachers and representatives in conference directed their attention to the means to be employed in future for the more effectual diffusion of religious knowledge amongst the people committed to their care. It was therefore resolved, that a periodical publication should be established for the benefit of the connexion, and which should be published quarterly, under the title of "THE PRIMITIVE WESLEYAN METHODIST MAGAZINE."

At an early period in Methodism Mr. Wesley found that he wanted a medium through which he could reply to the numerous attacks made upon himself and his society, as well as introduce into general circulation several choice treatises on

general redemption, and some interesting selections from his extensive correspondence with persons of piety and usefulness in different parts of the world. He therefore began, in the year 1778, to publish a periodical work, which he entitled, "The Arminian Magazine; consisting of Extracts and Original Treatises on Universal Redemption." This periodical, which the founder of Methodism conducted himself while he lived, proved of peculiar service to the connexion which he had established. After his example, therefore, the Primitive Methodists of Ireland found the necessity of issuing a similar publication, the first volume of which came out in the year 1823, and it is still continuing to be published every alternate month, and is in extensive circulation amongst the friends and members of the connexion in this country. Its utility as a vehicle of useful information, as well as an authentic record of those transactions with which the interests of Methodism are inseparably connected, must appear at once to the most inattentive observer, and should be a stimulus to its friends to extend its circulation.

It was also agreed, about the same time, that a book-room should be established in Dublin for the use of the connexion. This was accordingly opened shortly after, at 62, South Great George's-street, where it continues to be well supplied with a great variety of such publications as are calculated to be useful to the body at large.

When the connexion had been properly organized, and the different circuits which it occupied perfectly supplied with preachers, it was found that a considerable portion of Ireland did not come within the range of that system of itinerancy which had then been established. Besides, the preachers in general were sufficiently employed upon those different circuits to which they had been appointed by the conference; and had no time to spare to visit other places, how destitute soever they might be of the means of religious instruction. It was therefore resolved in the conference held in 1821, that a PRIMITIVE WESLEYAN METHODIST HOME MISSION should be established, for the purpose of visiting those neglected parts of Ireland, where ignorance and superstition had long maintained an awful ascendency. Indeed, from the commencement of the connexion, this plan had been tried upon a small scale, but when the good effects of it became in some time so apparent to the conference, they found it necessary to organize a society for that purpose, and were subsequently enabled, by the liberality of the friends of religion, to extend their operations, and to enlarge considerably this part of the connexional machinery.

To enter into any detail of the operations of this society, more than merely to mention its formation, would be foreign from the design of this hasty sketch of the history of Primitive Methodism in Ireland. But it may be remarked, that in an

age of missions, in which such laudable exertions are being constantly made for the conversion of the heathen, a Home Mission for Ireland should have peculiar attractions for the friends of religion in this country. Ireland at present contains a population of nearly eight millions of immortal souls, capable of endless misery, or of eternal happiness. They are not to us like the inhabitants of China, Asiatic Russia, or the savages that fill the numerous islands of the Southern Pacific. They are persons breathing the same air with ourselves, supported by the same soil, and subjects of the same government: they are, in fact, in the strictest sense of the word, our brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh: those whom we have daily seen and conversed with in the present life, and of whom, therefore, we are likely to have a more intimate knowledge in another. These considerations tend to enlist every noble and patriotic feeling in favour of an institution, the sole object of which is the spiritual regeneration of the inhabitants of our native land.

This much might be said of any Mission established in Ireland for the propagation of the doctrines of the reformed religion amongst our fellow-countrymen. But when the peculiarities of the Primitive Methodist Missions are taken into account, they will appear to have a special claim upon the support of all the friends of true religion, by whatever denomination their religious profes-

sion may be distinguished. "The missionaries," say the General Rules, "who are sent out by the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society are viewed only as Protestant teachers, employed to instruct mankind in the doctrines of God our Saviour, and are not to interfere in the administration of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The object of this society is the extension of its missions to all the nations of the earth, but in particular *throughout Ireland*, as far as the benevolence of the friends of religion shall enable it to do so." Regular communications are made from each of the missionaries to the general secretary respecting their success and the effects of their labours; and extracts from these are published every quarter for the satisfaction of subscribers and the information of the friends of missions.

In the month of January, 1826, the Missionary Society had to lament the loss of their pious and excellent treasurer, Bennet Dugdale, Esq., of the city of Dublin. This upright and consistent follower of Christ had, at a very early period in life, experienced the commencement of that work of grace upon his heart, which was afterwards productive of such an uniformity of conduct as did not fail to recommend the religion of Christ to all with whom he had any intercourse. He had been convinced of sin under a sermon by a Methodist preacher in the year 1774, and not long after found

peace with God through the atoning blood of the Saviour. He joined the Methodist Society at a time when such a connexion was by no means popular, and through the remaining part of his life supported such a consistency of character as contributed, in no inconsiderable degree, to raise Methodism in the estimation of all who knew him. As a leader and local preacher his talents were of the first order; and accompanied by that piety which shone so conspicuously in his whole walk and conversation, were well calculated to make him eminently useful in the church of Christ.

When the separation took place in the Methodist body, Mr. Dugdale, as might be expected from his character, espoused the cause of Primitive Wesleyan Methodism; and, at the request of his brethren, laid the first stone of the preaching-house in South Great George's-street. His death was a serious loss to the connexion; but to himself it was an event of incalculable gain. His funeral sermon was preached by Mr. Revington, in South Great George's-street preaching-house, on Sunday evening, the 22d of January.*

The third anniversary of the Missionary Society,

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* For a more particular account of this excellent man, the reader is referred to Mr. Revington's sermon on the occasion of his death, which will be found in the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Magazine for the year 1826, page 18.

which was held in July 1827, was attended with circumstances which gave peculiar interest to the proceedings, and created an intense anxiety in behalf of the objects of that institution. No less than nine clergymen of the Established Church appeared on the platform at this meeting, which was attended by a numerous and highly respectable assemblage of persons. The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of Dublin took the chair; and the meeting was addressed by the Rev. Dr. Singer, the Rev. Messrs. Fawcett, Otway, Shore, and Kingston, by Thomas R. Guest and William Curry, Jun. Esqrs., and by Messrs. Heather, M'Fann, Ford, Pearce, and Revington, preachers in the connexion. In the course of the addresses, particularly in that of Dr. Singer, the position which Primitive Methodism occupied, in its relation to the Established Church, was eloquently portrayed; and the whole proceeding was such as could not fail to produce an effect, not only highly favourable to the missionary institution, but to the religious society in general with which it was connected.

It may here be remarked, that no voluntary and independent society could, in that capacity, be recognized by churchmen as part and parcel of the Established Church; and viewing Methodism in its primitive constitution, it can be considered in no other light than that which it really professes to be, namely, A RELIGIOUS SOCIETY,

composed of those, out of every sect and party, who have a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and who wish to meet together for mutual edification. But, at the same time, there are certain considerations which give the Primitive Methodists a claim upon the established clergy, that they have not upon any other body of Christian teachers throughout the world. Amongst many others we would suggest the following, to which we would beg the serious attention of the reader:

1. The number of the clergy at present is not sufficient to give religious instruction to the Protestant population of Ireland, and as the church has no system of aggression by which she can gather in the wandering sheep, that "have erred and strayed from the right way;" it is no imputation on the zeal, energy, or activity of the established clergy of Ireland to say, that under these circumstances additional labourers are wanted.

2. Notwithstanding the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist connexion includes a considerable number of Protestant dissenters, who never were and are not now members of the episcopal establishment of this country, yet, perhaps, nine-tenths of the society belong to the Established Church, believe her doctrines, adhere to her communion, and as civil members of society, are at least upon an equality with any other class of persons professing to be within her pale.

3. The Primitive Wesleyan Methodists of Ire-

land have, as a body, given incontestable proofs of their strong attachment to the Established Church; as rather than submit to a measure which had for its object a separation from her communion, they broke up their connexion with their former friends, (which was a sacrifice that perhaps few persons unacquainted with Methodism are able to estimate;) they relinquished their claims to many thousands of pounds that they had expended in the erection of the old chapels, and spent many thousands more in the erection of new ones, that they might continue their connexion with the establishment.

4. They have given all the security it is possible for a voluntary society to give, for their future attachment to the Established Church. The "General Principles," binding them to the *old plan* of Methodism, must be subscribed by every preacher who is received to travel in the connexion: the chapels which they erect are settled on trustees for the exclusive use of those members who adhere to the original plan; and should all the members at any time depart from it, and leave the communion of the Established Church, those chapels are thereby forfeited to the crown, and to be disposed of as charitable property.

5. The very *existence* of the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist connexion depends upon their attachment to the church, for the moment they leave

her communion they renounce the very principle which united them together in their re-organized state; so that, as the judicious author of the *Conference Reviewed* observes, their "connexion with the national church is not, as was heretofore the case, that of accidental contact, but a continuative union, growing out of deliberate choice."

6. The object of the labours of the present preachers is, to make those doctrines which are held by the Established Church more generally known, and the duties of religion more generally practised; and, were it not for their exertions, many souls would have become the prey of popish priests, and others would have perished for lack of knowledge, who are now under the comfortable and salutary influence of religion, and adorning the doctrines of God their Saviour.

7. The political principles of the Primitive Wesleyan Methodists are those which are found in the Word of God, taught by the Church of England, so much wanted in the present day, and which are calculated to promote the happiness and welfare of society at large.

8. The labours of the Primitive Methodist preachers are carried on at such times and under such circumstances, as not to prevent the members of the Established Church from attending her service, whilst at the same time, they are calculated to raise the tone of religious feeling

amongst a considerable portion of those who abide by her communion.

9. The Methodist economy, if judiciously handled, might be made a powerful engine in the hands of the established clergy, in promoting the spiritual welfare of their respective flocks, in a way which they themselves could not so effectually do, as, from their station in society, the people could never take the same liberty in unbosoming themselves to them which they would do to a Methodist preacher.

10. It must be admitted that some of the Methodists may not be strongly attached to the established church, whilst others of them are not members of it at all; but even these are not to be made better by repulsion, but by Christian kindness and conciliation. And we should always remember, if we could not make men as good churchmen as we would wish, we ought to make them as good as we can.

These considerations ought to be sufficient to convince the clergy of the establishment that it would be their wisdom, as a body, to treat the Primitive Methodists with more cordiality than they have hitherto done: nor should they be insensible of the sacrifices that have been made by this society for the sake of those principles that bind them to the church. This would imply no compromise of any principle upon the part of the highest churchman in the nation; nor would

it even require an approval of all the peculiarities of the discipline and economy of the Methodist body. But when clergymen, at the best, seem to make no distinction between those who have suffered much for the church, and those who have strained every nerve to injure it, such is human nature, that it must have a pernicious effect upon the minds of even the best and most principled of men. An excellent clergyman, who, we believe, never had any connexion himself with Methodism, has made the following judicious observations :— "I have always considered the people called Methodists as members of our own church, in the strict and proper sense of the words. They profess themselves such; they are baptized as such ; they attend the public service of the church as such ; they believe and receive her doctrines; they partake with us of the holy communion; and, when they die, they are happy to lay their bones with us. What further, or better proofs, can any man have, or desire, of their being members of the church of England? * * * * In their warm attachment to the established church, the Methodists, as a body of people (for I am told there are many individuals amongst them who are dissenters in principle) differ, essentially differ, from every denomination of dissenters whatever. Every other denomination of Christians exert all their power and influence to draw off the members of the church of England to their own communion. And,

if once they are drawn off, they not only cease to assemble with us for the worship of Almighty God, and to baptize their children in our way, and to receive the holy communion with us; but, their minds being alienated from us, and embittered against us, they usually become our most virulent opposers, not only in forms and ceremonies, but oftentimes also in the great leading and fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. This then, I say, is a very great and material difference between the Methodists and every denomination of dissenters. The former are the avowed friends, and the latter the declared and determined enemies of the church of Christ, as established in these lands."

If, in connexion with these remarks, we give an extract from a small work written by a zealous and talented clergyman of the church, let it not be supposed that we are going abroad in quest of a character for the Methodist society. This Methodism has long since acquired for itself. But we are anxious to conciliate the esteem and countenance of the clergy of the establishment, by showing from the testimony of members of their own body, the relative position of the system, and the amount of good that is effected by its instrumentality.—"It may excite a smile of contempt," says the writer, "upon the cheek of the high and aristocratic senator or churchman to name as intelligent and active co-operators in the increase of religious knowledge—*the Methodists in connexion with the*

church. But all countries, and all sects and denominations, may be challenged to produce a body of men possessed of more zeal, greater abstraction from all personal advantages and wealth, or the acquisition of any authority independent of the establishment, and more anxiety to engage actively, by affording their meeting-houses and personal services in this cause. Ireland, and the Protestant churches, are deeply indebted to them for the absolute and undeniable preservation of the scriptural faith, in parishes and towns, where, without their appearance, *the very name* would have been wholly extinct, and not a single family in the lower ranks have remained to occupy (in many places) the *now* reviving churches. Let not, therefore, their advances be received with distrust, or regarded with coldness: they have been sure and secret friends to the establishment—and this *fact*, the most talented leaders of our opponents have repeatedly, even with sorrow, admitted."*

These views of Primitive Methodism are in perfect accordance with the declarations of its founder, as well as the uniform professions of that body in Ireland, who, regarding his "judgment and advice," have resolved never to separate from the church.

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* Ireland, and the Remedy for her Evils. By A. R. C., a Clergyman of the Established Church. Dublin: Wm. Curry, Jun. and Co —1830.

In the address of the preachers to the members of their societies throughout Ireland, published in the Minutes of 1832, they observe:—"We are more than ever convinced, that Primitive Wesleyan Methodism possesses those distinguishing characteristics, which peculiarly recommend it to the notice, and secure the attachment of the public: while it offers facilities, exclusively its own, for extensive usefulness. We have no sectarian objects in view, we have no design of separating those who unite with us from the churches to which they before belonged,—we do not administer the ordinances of Baptism or the Lord's Supper,—we do not supersede the regular clergy in the discharge of their duties, but move in the humble sphere of auxiliaries,—we are not a *church*, but merely a *religious society*, and only design to make those who attend our ministry better members of their respective churches, and better Christians."

In the meeting from which this address was issued, a resolution was passed, disapproving of the withdrawal of the sacred volume from the national schools of Ireland; and another agreeing that a petition to both houses of parliament should be presented from the Conference, expressive of the opinion of that body upon the subject of national education. "The past year," they say in their address, "in its record of occurrences, will stand prominent in the page of history, as a period fraught with great events. The legislative measures

of our rulers, whether already passed or passing into law, present us with many new features, in the aspect of the political affairs of our country; while they threaten to impede the success of our most valuable national institutions. Amidst the former, we behold reform with all its prospective consequences; while, in the latter, we witness the unhallowed attempt to exclude the unmutilated word of God, from having its proper share in the training up of the rising generation. With concerns of a political nature, however, we have nothing to do, —this is not our sphere—the kingdom of our Divine Master is not of this world, and we confidently leave the disposal of events in His hand, who can do whatsoever pleaseth Him. In doing so, we have the fullest persuasion, that, notwithstanding the gloom which hangs over the present appearance of things, His providence, which governs the affairs of nations, and especially of His church, will over-rule all matters for the establishment of His own kingdom, and the promotion of His own glory."

Notwithstanding the Primitive Methodists have always expressed themselves with great moderation upon political subjects, their principles have been uniformly conservative in the highest degree: nor have they ever been found to act inconsistently with the views of their truly constitutional founder upon any point in which the welfare and prosperity of their country was concerned. In the late census

that was taken of the population of Ireland, they enrolled themselves, not as Methodists, but as members of the respective churches to which they belonged; and this line of conduct was commended by the ensuing Conference, which assembled in Dublin, in 1835. Nor would it be doing justice to this body to omit the insertion of the following loyal and patriotic address to the Queen, agreed upon in the Conference of 1837, and shortly after presented to her Majesty by the Right Honourable the Earl of Roden:

"TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY, &c. &c.

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,—We, the preachers and representatives of the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist connexion of Ireland, assembled in annual conference, beg leave, with most profound respect, to approach your Majesty, and to tender our dutiful homage and attachment to your royal person and government.

"Since it has pleased Almighty God to remove, by the hand of death, our late revered Sovereign, King William the Fourth, of happy memory, we hail with peculiar delight and satisfaction, in your Majesty's royal person, the accession of another member of the illustrious House of Brunswick to the throne of these realms. Convinced, as we are, that the affairs of men are under the guidance of Him 'by whom kings reign and princes decree justice,' we cannot but recognise the hand of an all-wise and gracious Providence in conducting your Majesty's royal ancestors to this country, to protect the establishment of the reformed religion amongst us, and to reign over this great and influential empire. And the paternal care, evinced by every Sovereign

of your Majesty's illustrious House, in fostering and promoting the interests of true religion in all their dominions, and in upholding and protecting the United Church of England and Ireland, affords an indication by no means obscure, that they were always sensible of their responsibility to the King of kings, as it respected those duties which He had so obviously assigned them to discharge.

"Notwithstanding, as humble preachers of the gospel of Christ, we are unaccustomed to mingle in political contests, or to take part in the collision of conflicting parties, we cannot conceal from ourselves that your Majesty has ascended the British throne at a time the most momentous to the interests of true religion that has occurred for a long period in the annals of our country. A spirit of change and innovation in some, and of hatred and avowed hostility to the reformed religion in others, seems to threaten in the present day not only to impair the efficiency of the Established Church, but wholly to subvert it in this part of your Majesty's dominions. Voluntarily, but firmly attached, like our venerable founder, the Rev. John Wesley, to the United Church of England and Ireland, and having extensive opportunities of observing the laudable and daily increasing exertions of the clergy, especially in this country, to spread scriptural truth, we are sensible of the great importance of such an establishment, as the most effectual means of promoting the future happiness of your people, as well as the firmest stay of your Majesty's throne and government; and we rely with confidence and humble expectation that the zeal and attachment to the Protestant religion, which have so long distinguished your royal predecessors, will suffer no diminution in your Majesty's person or government.

"With regard to ourselves, having learned the principles of loyalty and fidelity to our Sovereign, from the word of God, and being, from a conscientious conviction, attached to the national altar, as well as to the throne, we shall not

cease to propagate the same sentiments amongst that numerous portion of your Majesty's subjects that come within the range of our usual ministrations.

"Meanwhile, it is our earnest prayer to Almighty God that He may grant to your Majesty a long and prosperous reign, and so replenish your heart with the grace of his Holy Spirit, that, having faithfully discharged your duty upon earth, your Majesty may receive the approving sentence of the Judge of all—'Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

(Signed, on behalf of ourselves and the Conference,)

"Adam Averell, President.
"Alexander Stewart, Secretary.

"South Great George's-street, Dublin,
"July 7th, 1837."

From the year 1819, the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist connexion found a faithful friend and liberal supporter in the person of Thomas R. Guest, Esq., of Cardiff, in Wales. He had early in life enjoyed the advantages of a religious education; but, like many others, he had suffered those impressions which had been made upon his mind in his juvenile years to wear away; and it was not until the period stated above, that he was brought to experience a thorough change of heart, and peace with God through the atoning blood of Jesus. From that period, until the time of his death, he continued to adorn his Christian profession with profound humility of heart, and an increasing zeal and activity in the cause of his

blessed Redeemer. His death, which took place in the city of Dublin, early in the year 1837, is thus noticed in the address of the preachers assembled in the following Conference :—"We have, one and all, felt the wound which struck down, at our side, our ever valued and gratefully remembered friend, Thomas R. Guest, Esq. Led by business to visit this city, in the month of January last, he was arrested, in the prime of life, by the hand of death, and called to enjoy the reward of the righteous. In him our connexion has lost a long-tried and liberal supporter; and the many poor which his bounty relieved, a kind-hearted and benevolent benefactor. His amiable and devoted relict has marked her Christian affection for us, by remitting to our venerable president the sum of *One Hundred Pounds*,* which has been applied by him for the general benefit of the connexion."

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* This amount of liberality on the part of our highly esteemed friend, constitutes but one item in the sums subsequently placed by her at the disposal of the president of the conference, the Rev. Adam Averell, as a mark of her esteem for the Society with which Mr. Guest was so long connected. These sums have been appropriated by Mr. Averell to the benefit of our Home Missionary Society, the Superannuated Preachers and Widows' Fund, the Education Fund, and the Fund for the Reduction of the Debts on Preaching-houses.

In the meantime, the missionary department was rising every year in importance and extensive usefulness. In the conference of 1830, Mr. Revington had been appointed General Secretary to the Missions, with whom the missionaries were to hold a regular quarterly correspondence. He was also appointed to visit as many of the circuits and missions as it was practicable for him to do, in the the course of the year, for the purpose of holding public meetings, and using every other means which his prudence might suggest, for promoting the general prosperity of the society with which he was connected. This plan was attended with such an effect, that, in the course of three years afterwards, it was found necessary to appoint, in addition to the regular missionaries, a number of persons to labour in conjunction with the preachers so employed, as missionary school-masters and scripture readers.

In the selection of suitable persons to fill these offices, the rules laid down by the conference prescribe that they must be members of the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Society, strongly recommended by the Leaders' Meeting of the circuit to which they belong, as persons of prudence and steadiness, truly devoted to God, and possessing a real missionary spirit,—a preference is given to such as can read or speak the Irish language. These agents are to be placed under the superintendence of the preachers or missionaries respec-

tively, who labour in the same vicinity; and they are to devote their whole time to the work of visiting persons of every denomination, from house to house, for religious conversation, reading the scriptures, and prayer; holding meetings for prayer and exhortation; promoting the circulation of the scriptures and religious tracts; stimulating the poor to a regular attendance on the preaching of the gospel; and, in the case of such as are to be appointed masters, in conducting schools in which the *whole* scriptures are to be used—in the communication of useful and religious instruction to the children committed to their care. Upon the whole, it is impossible to describe the quantum of good that such an agency is calculated to produce. By the liberality of the friends of religion, the conference was enabled, in July, 1838, to employ in the missionary department, exclusive of the regular circuit preachers, 29 missionaries, 15 scripture readers, and to establish several mission schools, for which masters are provided, who are all under the superintendence of the parent society.

From the establishment of the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Home Mission, the society has continued to prosper, and is now a gradually increasing body. The various ramifications of the connexion, at present, extend themselves to every quarter of the country; and it is a consoling reflection that now, at the end of a century, there is still a portion of the Methodist body, more fully

resolved than ever to abide by their original calling; and, free from sectarian objects, to publish the gospel of the grace of God to those who are by nature "dead in trespasses and sins." While they prove faithful to this principle, there is no doubt but their labours will continue to be crowned with success: and their zeal and energy rewarded with a reward of grace in that day, when the Judge of quick and dead shall appear to give every man according to his works.

In a country situated as Ireland is, it is impossible to form an adequate idea of the importance and value of such a society as that of the Primitive Wesleyan Methodists. Zealous in the cause of religion, and sound in their political principles, the preachers of this connexion are both directly and indirectly the means of propagating those sentiments, which, if acted upon, will make men happy in time, and happy through all eternity. By the system of itinerancy which they maintain, they acquire a knowledge of the condition and circumstances of the people, and are enabled to suit their instructions accordingly. In addition to this, their attachment to the ecclesiastical establishment of Ireland, at a time when its enemies are so awfully multiplying, should render their system an object of interest to every real lover of God and man.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DOCTRINES AND DISCIPLINE OF THE PRIMITIVE WESLEYAN METHODISTS.

Before closing the present volume, it may be expected, that, for the information of those who are comparatively unacquainted with Methodism, we should give a brief outline of the doctrines, discipline, and peculiar services, of that body of which we have treated so largely in the foregoing pages. Receiving, as they do, the doctrines taught in the articles, homilies, and standard writings of the Church of England, some might think that a reference to these would be sufficient to give a proper view of their sentiments respecting those principles of religion which they consider to be explicitly taught in the word of God. But, as a difference of opinion is known to exist even amongst the clergy themselves upon some points of doctrine, in which they respectively lay claim to the authority of the church, it is obvious that a more minute detail of the doctrines of the Methodists becomes necessary, than a mere reference to the articles and homilies of the Church of England.

We shall therefore endeavour, as briefly as possible, to lay before the reader those religious opinions which the Primitive Wesleyan Methodists consider to be of essential moment in the Christian system:

I.—They believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are divinely inspired and of supreme authority: that they are the only rule of faith and practice, being perfectly sufficient for that purpose: and, that it is not only the privilege, but the duty of every child of man to search this sacred record, whole and unmutilated, in order to know the will of God, which is perfectly revealed therein.

II.—That there is one eternal and self-existent God, consisting of a Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead, revealed in the Scriptures, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: that to each of these Divine Persons are attributed the same properties and perfections; so that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God.

III.—That man was created after the image of God, sinless, and in his kind perfect; but that, by his disobedience, he fell from this state of innocence and purity, and involved all his posterity in the consequences of that fall: that, therefore, all men come into the world with such a propensity to moral evil as is utterly incurable by human means,

are by nature sinful, guilty, and helpless, and, without the grace of Christ, can do nothing that is good.

IV.—That, in the fulness of the time, the Second Person in the adorable Trinity became incarnate, being born of the Virgin Mary, but conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost; being perfect God, and perfect Man; so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion: and that, in his human nature thus united to the divine, he died as an atonement for all the sins of the whole world both original and actual: and that, through the efficacy of this atonement, he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.

V.—That in consequence of Christ's mediation, the Holy Spirit is given to all men, in order that they may be enlightened, quickened, comforted, purified, and made meet for heaven: and, that his influence is indispensably necessary to bring any sinner to genuine repentance, to produce in him a true and lively faith in Christ, to regenerate his heart, and to perfect his sanctification.

VI.—That repentance precedes justifying faith; and that every penitent sinner coming to God, confessing his sins to him, and through grace forsaking them, obtains a full and free pardon of his past offences, through faith alone, and not upon account of any merit that is in himself, or for any

thing that could be possibly done by him, but solely upon the ground of the all-atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

VII.—That the Holy Spirit is sent forth into the hearts of those that thus believe, to bear witness with their spirits that they are the children of God; and that he dwells (or remains) in them, as a spirit of adoption, whereby they are enabled to call God, Abba! Father!

VIII.—That the life of God in the soul of man is never stationary, but continually progressive: that no state of perfection is attainable in this life which excludes any farther growth in grace, or in the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ: and that therefore the believer should give constant and unremitting diligence to make his calling and election sure, to watch over the feelings of his own heart, to mark his own progress in the divine life, and to glorify God in whatever station in which it has pleased Divine Providence to place him.

IX.—That notwithstanding the impossibility of attaining to *absolute* perfection in this life, it is the privilege of the children of God to have the thoughts of their hearts so cleansed by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, that they may perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his holy name; and the attainment of this exalted privilege is that which they denominate, "*Christian* perfection."

X.—That the true believer in Christ is placed

under no necessity of ever falling from grace, or losing a sense of his acceptance with God; but that this he will most assuredly do, if he neglects to watch and pray: and, that having given place to the devil, fallen into sin, and lost the favour and image of the Most High, there is an awful possibility of his being allured through the deceitfulness of his own heart, to continue in this lapsed condition, and of his finally losing his own soul by his unfaithfulness.

XI.—That Christians lie under a perpetual obligation of observing the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper: the former to be administered to all converts to Christianity, as well as to the children of those who profess to believe the truths of the gospel, by the application of water to the subject, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" and the latter to be celebrated in the Christian Church, as a token of faith in the Saviour, a pledge of his love, and a means by which its members are made partakers of the benefits of his meritorious cross and passion: and that a wilful neglect of either of these holy Sacraments cannot be indulged without committing sin against God.

XII.—That the souls of the faithful departed are present with the Lord: that Christ will finally come to judge the whole human race, according to their works: that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust: and

that the Judge of all will separate the righteous from the wicked; will receive the former into "life eternal," but send away the latter into "everlasting punishment."

These doctrines, which were uniformly taught by the founder of Methodism, are still the subjects upon which the preachers in the connexion principally insist. As the object of the system is to make these truths, in their bearing upon experimental and practical religion, as widely diffused as possible, no material deviation from them is allowed in any of the preachers: but the private members are not bound to any particular system of Christian doctrine, so long as they continue to hold their peculiar opinions in a spirit of peace and charity, and are careful to adorn their profession of the gospel, by a suitable walk and conversation.

To the organization of Methodism, and the relative position which it occupies in reference to the Established Church and all other denominations of Christians, we have already adverted, and consequently need not recur to the same subject again. A few observations, however, upon the government of the body, as well as the peculiar and distinctive services which are kept up amongst the Methodists, may be necessary, in order to render the view which we have given of the system more perfect and complete.

The government of the Methodist connexion,

both as it respects legislation and a final appeal upon all matters connected with the discipline of the Society, is vested in the Conference. This body, which meets annually in Dublin, is composed of a president and secretary, chosen every year by ballot, with all the travelling preachers in full connexion, and one representative from every circuit, whose duty it is to assist the preachers by his counsel and advice, and to take the principal labour and responsibility of managing the financial concerns of the connexion.

For the more convenient exercise of discipline and despatch of business, a number of adjoining circuits, with those missions which may be contiguous to them, are united together in what is called a *District;* to which a chairman is appointed at the annual conference; and to the meeting of the preachers and representatives of the district considerable powers are intrusted in the executive government of those societies which exist within the limits of its jurisdiction. The members of the district meeting are called annually together some time before the Conference; but they may assemble oftener if a proper cause appear to the chairman to make that necessary. Their duty is, "to examine young men recommended by the quarterly meetings of the circuits to which they belong, as fit persons to become itinerant preachers; to inquire into the progress of preachers on trial; to try, and suspend preachers who may be erroneous

in doctrine, or immoral in conduct; to investigate the state of the circuits and mission stations on the district; to consider all the circumstances relating to the erection of preaching-houses; and to decide on what preachers shall attend the ensuing Conference."

Next in importance to the meeting of the district, is that of the leaders, either of a whole circuit assembled quarterly, or of any particular part of it, as often as local circumstances may render necessary or convenient. In cities or large towns it is usual for the leaders to meet every week; but their meeting is not considered a legitimate one unless when the superintendent preacher or his colleague, by his appointment, presides at it. The duty of the leaders' meeting is to assist the preachers of the circuit in every matter relative to the good government of the Society: to declare any person on trial improper to be received as a member: to approve or disapprove of such persons as the superintendent may nominate to be stewards or leaders: and to give their sanction to the appointment of all such persons as are permitted to act in a public capacity in the Society.

As the travelling preachers profess to be only laymen, they are not, under any circumstance, to interfere with the administration of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. "Before any person is received as a travelling preacher by the Conference, he must be strongly recommended by

the leaders' meeting of the circuit to which he belongs, after which he must be examined and approved of by a district meeting. He is then admitted on trial for four years, and if, during this time, it be found that he has both gifts and grace for the work—a just conception of salvation by faith—the love of God abiding in his heart—and that persons have been truly convinced of sin and converted to God by his preaching—these are regarded as sufficient proof that such an one has been called by the Holy Ghost to the work of the ministry. And accordingly he is received into full connexion with the Conference, subject, however, to an annual examination, respecting his moral conduct, prudence, and usefulness in the Church of Christ."

The duties of a travelling preacher are both numerous and arduous; and the privations and trials with which he must constantly meet in a life of unremitting itinerancy, are such as can be borne with true equanimity of mind only by those in whose hearts the flame of an ardent zeal for the salvation of sinners is continually kept alive. "The people," says Mr. Crowther, "ought to get great good from the constant change of the preachers; for, to the preachers, it is productive of many inconveniences and painful exercises." This, which is severely felt by every man who has spent any part of his life in itinerant labours, should, in the estimation of all good men, raise the

character of those who have sacrificed every feeling of domestic enjoyment for the good of others; and excite a spirit of tender and affectionate sympathy in their favour, to which no other class of religious teachers could have any claim.

To the local preachers, stewards, and leaders, in the connexion, it is but right to observe, that Methodism owes much of its prosperity; and, in proportion as these officers are found to possess genuine piety themselves, they have always proved a blessing to the people with whom they are more immediately connected. The local preachers, as we have observed before, are men who are considered eligible for the work of calling sinners to repentance, but who have not deemed it their duty to relinquish their secular pursuits, in order to devote themselves entirely to a life of itinerancy. It is necessary that they should have the approbation of a Local Preachers' Meeting (if such exist in the place,) as well as of the superintendent. But, if there be no regular Local Preachers' Meeting held on the circuit, then the approbation and sanction of the General Quarterly Meeting is judged sufficient. And, in order to prevent evils that might otherwise occur, no local preacher is to be permitted to preach in any other circuit than his own, without producing a recommendation from the superintendent of the circuit in which he lives.

It is the duty of the steward, to whom is com-

mitted the charge of the temporal concerns of the society or circuit for which he is appointed, to submit his accounts to the superintendent and leaders once a quarter. The time assigned for the continuance of his stewardship is limited to one year, unless he be re-appointed; and the circuit steward has, *ex officio*, a seat in the annual District Meeting, during the arrangement of every thing connected with the finances of the district.

To the office and duties of a leader we have directed the attention of the reader, in treating of the organization of Methodism; and need only observe in this place, that he, as well as the preachers, is bound, before he can legitimately enter upon his office, to subscribe in a book provided for the purpose in each circuit, the "General Principles" of the connexion, in order to guard against innovation, and to preserve Methodism in its original simplicity.

It is necessary that every member of the body at large should belong to some particular class; in which he receives his quarterly ticket, as a kind of certificate that he is acknowledged by the rest of his brethren. By this means the members are easily distinguished, discipline exercised, and imposture prevented.

At an early period in the history of Methodism, in addition to the ordinary system of meeting the society in classes, Mr. Wesley deemed it expedient to unite a select number of the members in a closer

kind of fellowship, under the denomination of *Bands.* The chief rules laid down for conducting the meetings of these little companies, he says, run thus:—"In order to confess our faults one to another, and pray one for another that we may be healed, we intend—1. To meet once a week, at least. 2. To come punctually at the hour appointed. 3. To begin with singing or prayer, 4. To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our soul, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting; and,—5. To desire some person among us (thence called a leader) to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptations."

As soon as it is deemed convenient, after the preacher has gone through the classes in his quarterly visitation, a meeting of all the members of the society is held, at which a Love-feast is celebrated, in token of the mutual love and affection which they bear towards each other. "In order to increase in them," says Mr. Wesley, "a grateful sense of all the mercies of the Lord, I desired that one evening in a quarter they should all come together, that we might *eat bread* (as the ancient Christians did) *with gladness and singleness of heart.* At these Love-feasts (so we termed them, retaining the name, as well as the thing, which

was in use from the beginning,) our food is only a little plain cake and water; but we seldom return from them without being fed, not only with the meat that perisheth, but with that which endureth to everlasting life."

At these Love-feasts, each person is at liberty to tell his religious experience; and, at the close of the meeting, after the preacher has exhorted and encouraged each to stedfastness and perseverance, and given suitable advice to the whole assembly, in reference to family and social duties, a collection is usually made for the relief of the poor of the society.

Besides the observance of the usual festivals appointed by the church, the Methodists have two distinct services connected with the commencement and close of the year, which are, we believe, peculiar to themselves, and which require to be noticed in this place.

The first of these is the renewal of their covenant with God, which is generally done upon the first Sunday in the new year, and is attended with considerable solemnity. For this they have a particular form, in which they dedicate themselves, body, soul, and spirit, to the service of God, and address Him in language that cannot fail to make an impression on the mind of the most careless and unthinking member that may happen to be present.

The concluding service of the year is one that

has recommended itself to many who are not otherwise disposed to fall in with the views and practices of the Methodists. This is the annual watch-night, which is continued till after mid-night, when the new year is ushered in with a suitable hymn, and the whole service is conducted in a manner corresponding with the solemnity of the occasion.

The practice of holding a watch-night service amongst the Methodists, originated with some reclaimed colliers of Kingswood, who, having been accustomed to sit late on Saturday night at the ale-house, transferred their weekly meetings, after their conversion, to the school-house, and continued there, praying and singing hymns, far into the morning. A complaint was made of this practice to Mr. Wesley; but, upon due consideration, he thought that he had no right to forbid it; and, therefore, turned it to the advantage and benefit of the society. "I was informed," says he, "that several persons in Kingswood frequently met together at the school, and (when they could spare the time) spent the greater part of the night in prayer and praise, and thanksgiving. Some advised me to put an end to this; but, upon weighing the thing thoroughly, and comparing it with the practice of the ancient Christians, I could see no cause to forbid it: rather, I believed it might be made of more general use. So I sen them word, 'I designed to watch with them on

the Friday nearest the full moon, that we might have light thither and back again.' I gave public notice of this on the Sunday before; and withal, that I intended to preach: desiring they, and they only, would meet me there who could do it without prejudice to their business or families. On Friday, abundance of people came; I began preaching between eight and nine; and we continued till a little beyond the noon of night singing, praying, and praising God.

"This we have continued to do once a month ever since, in Bristol, London, and Newcastle, as well as Kingswood; and exceeding great are the blessings we have found therein; it has generally been an extremely solemn season, when the word of God sank deep into the hearts even of those who till then knew him not. If it be said, 'This was only owing to the novelty of the thing (the circumstance which still draws such multitudes together at those seasons,) or perhaps to the awful silence of the night,' I am not careful to answer in this matter: be it so; however, the impression then made on many souls has never since been effaced. Now, allowing that God did make use either of the novelty, or any other indifferent circumstance, in order to bring sinners to repentance, yet they are brought; and herein let us rejoice together."

The solemnity usually attendant upon the watch-night service, at the close of the year, is consi-

derably increased by the reflection that another portion of time, marked out by the heavenly bodies themselves, has just passed into the great ocean of eternity; and that we are about to encounter a succeeding wave which must quickly follow that which has gone before it. Upon the whole, the religious services of Methodism are well calculated to awaken the slumbering, and to keep them awake to the importance of eternal things, and the happiness which is to be enjoyed in the possession of vital and experimental religion.

Allusion has before been made to the great number of preaching-houses which the zeal and liberality of the members and friends of the society have already erected. Some of these are of considerable dimensions, and in all of them the *sittings are free*, the Conference being determined in this respect, as well as in all others, to adhere to the arrangements of Mr. Wesley. Under no circumstances are pews permitted to be erected, and, though the income derivable from pew-rent might, in a pecuniary way, be useful to the connexion, they are resolved to sacrifice this, rather than throw any impediment in the way of the poorest person's having an opportunity of hearing the glad tidings of salvation, without money and without price.

There is one purpose to which the preaching-houses are in general applied, which, in such a country as Ireland, is of considerable importance,

—the use of Sunday-schools. No sooner had the philanthropic Robert Raikes, the father and founder of Sunday-schools, commenced his work of mercy in the city of Gloucester, in the year 1781, than Mr. Wesley perceived the importance of the system. By the exertions of some of the preachers and other pious individuals, a few schools were established in this country, previous to the formation of the Hibernian Sunday-school Society, in the year 1810. The extension of Sunday-school instruction in this part of the united kingdom, has been extensively promoted by this valuable institution. In numberless cases, it has already been acknowledged by the Lord in scattering the rays of gospel light over the moral gloom in which a vast proportion of the rising generation of this land was enveloped, and we doubt not it is intended by Providence as an instrument of far more extensive usefulness to this interesting, but too much neglected country. We are not able to say exactly how many Sunday-schools are under the direction of the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Conference. The numbers, we are aware, must be considerable; and, so deeply do we feel impressed with the great importance of the system as calculated to prove a national blessing that we avail ourselves of the present opportunity of urging upon the preachers and leaders of the connexion the important duty of renewing their exertions in this department of usefulness. The rising generation is the hope of the church, and by few

means, of which we are aware, could the Centenary year of Methodism be more usefully marked than by an extension of Sunday-school instruction.—The circumstances, indeed, ought to be peculiar under which a preaching-house should be placed, that would justify those connected with it, were there no Sunday-school assembling within its walls at the close of this year.

It might be attended with very happy effects if, at the time of the religious commemoration of the Centenary of Methodism, the children of our Sunday-schools, and other young persons, should be specially invited to join in separate services, and proper persons be selected to inform them of the gracious providence manifested towards these countries in the raising up of a small band of faithful men, by whom the gospel has been preached, sinners converted from the error of their ways, Bible Societies formed, missionaries sent forth, and Sunday-schools established for training up the young in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Tract Visiting Societies are auxiliaries which have more recently risen up to swell the amount of agency in operation for the evangelization of Ireland. Within the last four years a very considerable increase of exertion has been manifested in working this useful machinery; and at present, in most of the large towns, and on, we believe, all the circuits, Tract Societies are in operation. We have before us the last annual Report of the So-

ciety in connexion with one of our preaching-houses in Dublin, (South Great George's-street,) from which it appears that there are at present forty-six visiters who, on an average, lend tracts every week to four thousand individuals, both Protestants and Roman Catholics.

The Benevolent Stranger's Friend Society was instituted many years since for the purpose of affording relief to cases of real destitution, especially to friendless strangers. The visiters are persons of tried religious character, and are required to visit the person soliciting aid, and to report the case at the weekly meeting of the members before any relief can be afforded. In this labour of love they act gratuitously, as do also the officers of the institution, upon whom no small share of labour devolves. To estimate the amount of good effected by the Society would be impossible. Thousands of individuals are annually relieved in their abodes of misery, who, while receiving temporal aid, have also the benefits of redemption through Christ Jesus set before them; and, in addition to this, hundreds of strangers are enabled, by the timely interposition of the institution, to join their friends either in England or in distant parts of our own country. The City of Dublin Steam Packet Company have liberally granted to the Society the privilege of sending destitute strangers, in their vessels, to Liverpool and Belfast at a small charge—and so fully convinced are the

benevolent portion of the community that the Society affords one of the best channels of conveying their bounty to the poor, that, for a long period of time, it has received a large amount of money, and some bequests, towards the furtherance of its charitable designs. The Society meets every Friday evening at the Methodist preaching-house, South Great George's-street, to consider cases, and, as far as the funds will admit of it, to grant relief.

It is to the honour of Mr. Wesley that he anticipated, by nearly a century, the principle that is now so warmly advocated by the friends of temperance—abstinence from the use of ardent spirits, except for medicinal purposes. That the breach of his rule on this subject has been attended with the most awful consequences, both to individuals and families, cannot be denied. Many, who once bid fair for the kingdom of heaven, have been turned out of the way by tippling, and have ultimately met the drunkard's doom. This is a loud call upon all who would continue faithful to the end to avoid this accursed thing, and, both by precept and example, to wage war against one of the greatest enemies of our country and species.

Both in England and this country great preparations are at present being made for the celebration of the Centenary of Methodism—and if we here venture to express our opinion, as to the manner and spirit in which this important event should be

observed, we trust we shall not be deemed over officious. We are aware that, in compliance with the request of some highly esteemed friends in Dublin, the Rev. Adam Averell, in his official capacity, as president of the Conference, has issued a circular letter to convene a meeting of the principal members and friends of the Society in this city, on the 6th of March next. At this meeting, we have no doubt, such arrangements will be made, under the guidance of Divine Wisdom, as will lead to a highly profitable observance of this important commemoration. As this work, however, will be in circulation before that meeting shall have been held, we wish to place on record our own views of the manner in which the Centenary services should be conducted, in order to their proving conducive to the spiritual and temporal benefit of the connexion at large.

Upon a review of the good that has been effected through the instrumentality of Methodism, the predominant feelings in the hearts of the truly pious, must be those of humility and gratitude. No people, we may justly say, possess superior advantages, as it respects the means of grace, to those which are enjoyed by the members of the Methodist Society. And, it is probable, when we individually compare our present attainments with the opportunities with which the Great Head of the church has been pleased to favour us, that the services connected with the celebration of the

Centenary will have a tendency to humble our souls in the presence of our God. To many of us the words of the prophet Isaiah, respecting the vineyard of the Lord, will doubtless apply with great force:—"My beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes."

But whilst humility of soul should be justly engendered upon this occasion, it should not be of that nature that would damp the ardour of our gratitude to God. Were we merely to celebrate the greatness of the work in reference to the instruments employed in it, our spirits might be elated with a view of what was effected; but our hearts would be devoid of that gratitude to the real Author of it, which this season of rejoicing is designed to ensure. The Messrs. Wesley and Whitefield were great and good men in their day and generation; but they were only agents in the service of their Master, as it was he that qualified them for the honourable work in which they were so successfully laborious, and employed them in it. With regard to the blessings of the gospel, conveyed to us through human means, we should always recollect that "we have this treasure in

earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

It will be perceived, by the last number of our Magazine, that the esteemed president of the Conference has appointed the 6th of March (the day on which the Centenary Committee will hold its first meeting in Dublin) as a day of special and united prayer for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon our Societies, the church, and the world. "The plan," says Mr. Averell, "that I would take the liberty of recommending to the preachers and leaders is this—that, wherever practicable, prayer-meetings should be held in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, and that the rest of the day should be spent, as far as possible, in the exercises of private devotion. Thanksgivings to the Lord, accompanied with a deep sense of our past unfaithfulness, should also mark those services: for what people have more cause for unfeigned gratitude to our gracious God than we. In the celebration of this important epoch in the history of our society, we should be careful not to glory in man. Mr. Wesley was indeed a holy man, and an eminently successful preacher of the gospel, but he was only what God made him. His piety, his zeal, his talents, were his gifts, and used for his glory. I trust, therefore, we shall be enabled to look above man, and, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to lay hold upon the strength of the Mighty God of Jacob. In the

dying words of our venerated founder, I would say—'The best of all is, God is with us!' He has set before us an open door for the preaching of the everlasting gospel: and, while we devote ourselves wholly to our work, and in all points keep close to Mr. Wesley's plan, I believe the Lord will bless us, and make us a blessing." The importance of these sentiments, and of the appointment to which they refer must be apparent. Unless intercessory prayer constitute a large ingredient in the celebration, no extensive blessing can be expected. The large proportion of the population of this country that still lies in darkness and ignorance, can scarcely be reached by any other means, while the vice and immorality that so extensively prevail, should be made a matter of special supplication at the throne of grace. And, in this duty we have much ground for encouragement, for certain it is, that no faithful prayer can ascend to heaven in vain. It is well observed by an old writer, that "Abraham was so zealous for the preservation of Sodom, that, by an humble importunity he brought God down to these terms—that, if there were but ten wheat-ears in Sodom, all the tares would have been spared for these ten men's sake. And, when God was gone from Abraham, he continued so solicitous for the good of Sodom, that (as Luther thinks) he could not sleep all night. Certainly, the Scripture saith, 'He gat up early in the morning to the place where he

stood before the Lord, and he looked toward Sodom,' to see what was become of his prayers." Now, if Abraham was so solicitous about Sodom, ought not we to be much more zealous for the salvation of our countrymen, and their emancipation from the bondage in which they lie enchained? Above all, we should remember Zion in our supplications to the Almighty. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say—Peace be within thee."

Meetings for public religious exercises will, of course, hold a prominent place in the proceedings connected with the observance of the Centenary. The object on those occasions should be to raise the tone of spiritual feeling amongst our own members, as well as amongst persons belonging to the different Protestant communities who may be induced to to join with us in worship. It might answer a valuable purpose too, if deputations were formed to assist at those services, especially in all the cities and principal towns in Ireland, and if arrangements were made to lay before the congregations that should assemble, a concise history of the rise and progress of the Society, and of the doctrines which we hold.

Social religious meetings, such as are frequently held in Dublin and elsewhere, amongst the Methodists, have often proved exceedingly instructive

and profitable: and it has occurred to us, in consequence of a very gratifying account that we have lately had of a breakfast meeting which was held, at the commencement of this year, by the leaders belonging to the Charlemont circuit, and at which upwards of eighty leaders were present, that if, previous to the public services in each town or district, a similar meeting should be held of all the official characters and principal friends of the Society, it might be attended with much advantage. The occasion would afford a suitable opportunity of strengthening the Christian love of the brethren, and of mutually consulting as to the best means of carrying on, with more zeal and devotedness, the work of the Lord. The triumphs of Methodism can only be reviewed with feelings of joy and spiritual delight by those who have themselves been happily brought to experience that salvation which it offers from the Great Lord of the universe to all who embrace it by living faith. Extensive as has been the work already accomplished by this instrumentality, much still remains to be done; and in no way can we manifest higher respect for the memory of our justly revered founder, than by imitating his zeal in seeking the conversion of sinners, and the building up of believers in their most holy faith. Union of purpose and effort in this great and glorious work must be successful. Connected with a holy life and blameless conversation, nothing appears better calculated to impress

those around us with a concern for eternal things, than the earnestness with which we beseech them to attend to the things which make for their peace, before they are for ever hid from their eyes. A faithful testimony against sin, by whomsoever committed, was constantly borne by the early Methodists, and appears as indispensably necessary in our day as it was then. The command of Jehovah is still binding on his people—"Thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Amongst the public means that have been most useful, we may mention meetings for promoting a revival of religion. When these meetings are properly conducted, good seldom fails to be done. To be so, however, they must be engaged in with humble reliance upon the aid of the Holy Spirit, and be conducted in the exercise of faith for a present manifestation of God's saving power. The great preparative of public usefulness is private devotion. Here the flame is to be kindled which is to animate us in our course of duty. Much wisdom is necessary in carrying forward the work of God. For the attainment of this, two sources are available—the word of God, and throne of grace. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God;" and, with this asking, let him connect a close study of that sacred volume, which is the production of infinite wisdom, "and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Thus

qualified, if proper exertions be made, we may expect that the centenary year of Methodism will be marked by a gracious outpouring of the Spirit of God, and a consequent ingathering of souls into the society.

We are glad to perceive that it is intended to connect pecuniary contributions, as a Thank-offering to the Lord, for the privileges and blessings which, as Methodists, we enjoy, with the present celebration. This is as it should be. It would ill accord with the liberality heretofore manifested by the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist body, to be satisfied with a commemoration of this nature that would "cost them nothing." A preliminary meeting, having reference to this object, has already been held by a few of the leading members and friends of the Society in this city. On that occasion, resolutions expressive of the views of the persons present as to the formation of a CENTENARY FUND, were unanimously adopted. In one of the resolutions, the Rev. Adam Averell, as president of the Conference, is "requested to convene a meeting of such members and friends of the Society as he may judge it prudent or necessary to invite, from different parts of Ireland, to be held in Dublin, early in the month of March, 1839."—With this request Mr. Averell has complied, and we express our confident hope that the Great Head of the church will direct the deliberations of his servants, when assembled at their intended meeting.

The advantages which have resulted to individuals and families, from the formation and continuance of the Methodist Society, are worthy of being noticed at the close of this chapter, as they flow from the doctrines the Methodists have been taught, and the discipline to which they have submitted. From the commencement of the system, the grand characteristic of Methodist preaching has been this, that it aimed at the heart. The sermons of those men who have been most highly acknowledged of the Lord, in the conversion of sinners, consisted chiefly in a plain, forcible statement of the fundamental truths of Scripture. Convinced, however, that unless the Holy Spirit applied the word spoken to the consciences of the hearers no real good could be done, fervent prayer was offered up for Divine assistance. Thus honouring the word and Spirit of God, God honoured them, and multitudes were convinced of their awful state by nature and practice. As faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the great instrumental cause of a sinner's justification, these penitents were urged to an immediate surrender of themselves to him, and an humble reliance upon the blood of atonement for pardon. The effects produced were glorious. Embracing Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour from the guilt and power of sin, they became new creatures, and walked in newness of life. Their unholy associates were shunned, and their bad practices at once and for

ever abandoned. In the case of such as had families, the change was soon manifest in the domestic circle. There is, perhaps, no situation in which the Christian parent appears to more advantage than when leading the devotions of his family. This duty, connected with the reading of the sacred Scripture, was at the first, and, we are happy to say, still continues to be, the practice of the head of almost every Methodist family. In this way does the pious father fill the office of both prophet and priest to his household, instructing them in the knowledge, and leading them in the worship of the Almighty. Nor is this all; he discharges also the duties of a king, by maintaining order, subordination, and discipline. Of this latter parental duty God has been pleased to speak in terms of strong approbation in reference to Abraham: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." A popular writer on the domestic constitution has well remarked, that "It is certainly under the wise instruction, and the impartial sceptre, of a father, and within the little family circle, that the son becomes a good citizen; it is by the fire-side, and upon the family hearth, that loyalty, and patriotism, and every public virtue, grows; as it is, in disordered families, that factious demagogues, and turbulent rebels, and tyrannical oppressors, are trained up to be their

neighbour's torment, or their country's scourge. It is there that the thorn and the brier, to use the elegant simile of the prophet, or the myrtle and the fir tree, are reared, which are in future time to be the ornament and defence, or the deformity and misery, of the land." Mothers, too, have an important part to bear in the training up of their youthful charge—and, doubtless, as far as forming the habits of their children, and the instilling of religious principles into their minds go, their opportunities exceed those of the father, and, of course, their labour is proportionably successful. In a family wherein both parents exert themselves to bring up their children for heaven, his presence who blessed the family of Bethany will abide, and under his guidance they shall be led safely through life, and by his mercy be preserved to the day of eternal redemption.

There is a close connection between seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness first, or in preference to every worldly object, and a proper attention to the affairs of this life. With the truly pious, diligence in business is regarded as a Christian obligation. Order, cleanliness, industry, and strict scrupulous integrity, marked the character of the primitive Methodists—and, while such was the case, we cannot wonder that the blessing of God rested upon their various callings in life. Besides shedding a steady light upon their prospects for eternity, religion, in innumerable in-

stances, has been the forerunner of brighter days in reference to worldly prosperity. It has given character to its possessor—opened in his mind the desire of improvement—and led the way, from very humble life, to situations of wealth and usefulness. This has been the case with numerous individuals and families, from the establishment of Methodism to the present day. Nor have their obligations to the system which has instrumentally raised them to respectability and influence been in general forgotten. Cases, indeed, may have occurred wherein the warmth of heart, and the liberality of hand which should have been manifested towards the cause of God have not been evinced—but in a large number of instances, individuals and families continue to afford substantial proofs of lively gratitude. These can unite with the psalmist when he exclaimed:—"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

We are far from assuming that worldly prosperity is always a necessary consequence of devotedness to the Lord. But however straitened in his circumstances a man may be, that religion will improve his state, and raise him in his worldly condition above individuals of the same class, who have no fear of God before their eyes, will, we think, not be denied by any one who is a close

observer of men and things. Methodism has been honoured in bringing the gospel to multitudes of the poor—and though the improvement in their condition, compared with what persons of the same rank were a century ago, in point of morality, information, and domestic comfort, is most marked, yet this is a very small part of the good that it has accomplished. Hundreds of families that Methodism had found poor, it has left poor. Their dwellings are still lowly, their clothing coarse, their food of the plainest kind, but they are not poor towards God. Their bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost: they are arrayed in the garments of salvation: and daily partake of the bread of eternal life. In their humble habitations the voice of thanksgiving and of joy is heard—and at their domestic altars the morning and evening sacrifice of praise and prayer is offered. To say they have no privations and trials, would argue a total ignorance of the feelings of human nature; but amidst the crosses and ills of life they are sustained by the promises of the gospel, and look forward with joyful anticipation to their dismissal from the body, and to their abode on the hills of light, in company with all the redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, when time shall be no more.

At the period when the providence of God raised up the Messrs. Wesley and Whitefield, England was fearfully circumstanced, both religiously and politically. Iniquity and licentiousness awfully

prevailed; infidel and revolutionary principles were extensively propagated; and, as it regarded all that is venerable in our Protestant institutions, the love of many waxed cold. Had this state of things much longer continued, without some counteracting influence, the frame-work of society must have been dashed to pieces, and anarchy and confusion spread their ravages far and wide. But the Lord looked in mercy upon the country, and before the cup of its iniquities was full, means were brought into operation to call back the people to repentance, and reformation of heart and life. Primarily this was the work of God—instrumentally, to a great extent, it was the work of Methodism. And though in the present day the amount of the nation's guilt is great, principally owing to the non-recognition of the Providence of God as presiding over our national affairs, in the abandonment of our high position as a Protestant state, and in the too general disregard of the Sabbath, yet does the Lord continue to bless his heritage, and is daily adding to the number of his faithful followers. To us, Great Britain appears to be preserved in her present commanding position, in consequence of the number of individuals and families among her population who are truly Christian, the amount of faithful prayer which they daily offer up, and the noble efforts which are so extensively made on behalf of the extension of scriptural education, and for the dissemination of gospel truth both at home and abroad.

If we have expressed ourselves strongly, when speaking of what Methodism has effected for individuals and families, and the nation at large, let us not be charged with glorying in men. Methodism is, at best, but an agency employed by God for the accomplishment of his own purposes; and, for the amount of good which the Great Head of the church has been pleased to effect by it, we trust both ourselves and our readers will be led to give the praise and glory to Him alone, to whom it justly belongs. It is said of Protogenes, that, having seen a curious line which was drawn in a painter's shop, he exclaimed, "None but Apelles could have drawn this line," so none but God could have been the author of such a great work as has been effected by Methodism, and of the extensive revival of experimental and practical religion to which it has given rise.

THE END.

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